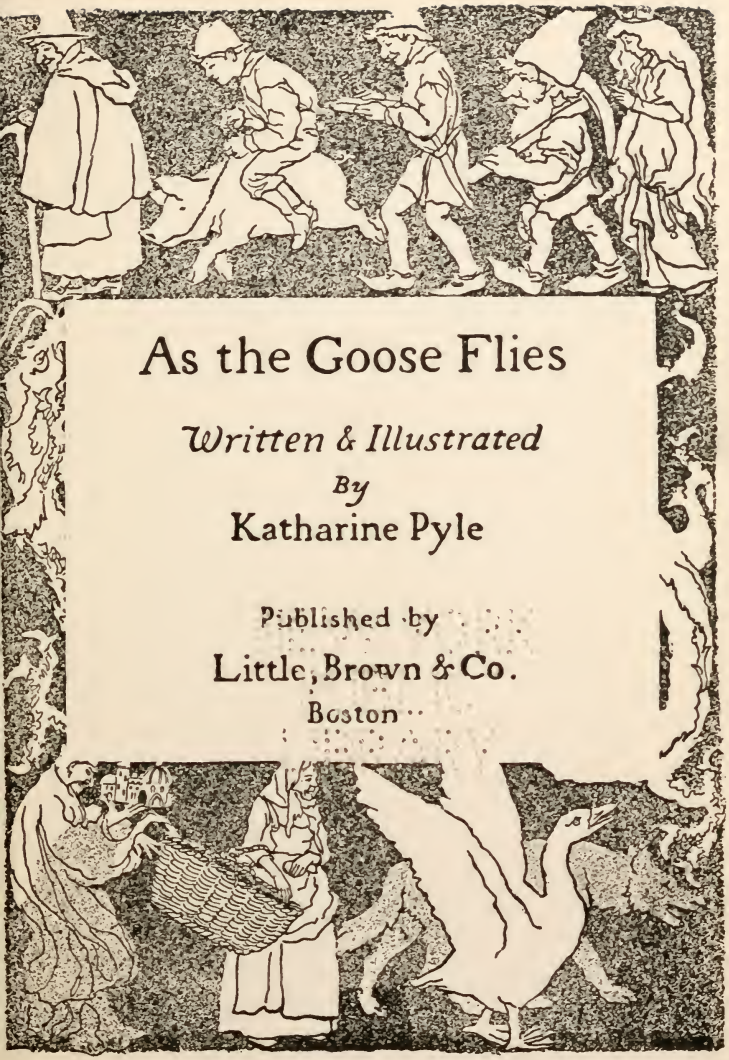
Pyle
As the goose flie

As the Goose Flies

By Katharine Pyle

THE CHRISTMAS ANGEL
AS THE GOOSE FLIES
NANCY RUTLEDGE
IN THE GREEN FOREST
WONDER TALES RETOLD
TALES OF FOLK AND FAIRIES
TALES OF WONDER AND MAGIC
FAIRY TALES FROM FAR AND NEAR



As the Goose Flies

Written & Illustrated

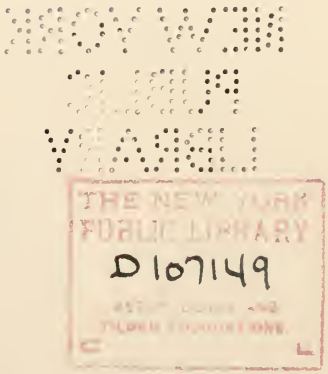
By

Katharine Pyle

Published by

Little, Brown & Co.

Boston



Printed in the United States of America

Contents

List of Illustrations

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Chapter One

Behind the Bookcase

ELLEN stood at the nursery window looking out at the gray sky and the wet, blowing branches of the trees. It had been raining and blowing all day. The roof pipes poured out steady waterfalls; the lilacs bent over, heavy with the rain. Up in the sky a bird was trying to beat its way home against the wind.

But Ellen was not thinking of any of these things. She was thinking of the story that her grandmother had forgotten again.

Ellen's grandmother was very old; so old that she often called Ellen by the names of her own little children; children who had grown up or died years and years ago. She was so old she could remember things that had happened seventy years before, but then she forgot a great many things, even things that had occurred only a few minutes before. Sometimes she forgot where her spectacles were when they were pushed back on her head. Most of all she forgot the stories she tried to tell Ellen. She would just get to a very interesting place, and then she would push her spectacles up on her forehead and look vaguely about her. "I forget what came next," she would say.

Very often Ellen could help her out. "Why, granny, don't you know the little bear's voice was so thin and shrill it

woke little Silverhair right up? Then when she opened her eyes and saw the three bears—" or, "Why then when Jack saw the giant was fast asleep he caught up the golden hen—" and so the little girl would go on and finish the story for the old grandmother.

But there was one story that Ellen could not finish for her grandmother. It was a story that she had never heard; at least she had never heard the end of it. It was about a little princess named Goldenlocks who always had to wear a sooty hood over her beautiful shining hair, and who had a wicked stepmother.

Again and again the grandmother had begun the story, but she never got further in it than where Goldenlocks was combing her hair at night all alone in the kitchen. When she had reached that point she would stop and say, "Ah, what was it that came next? What was it, little Clara? Can't you remember? It's so long since I have

told it." Clara was the name by which the grandmother oftenest called Ellen.

Sometimes the little girl tried to make up an ending to the story, but always the grandmother would shake her head. "No, no," she would cry, "that's not it. What was it? What was it? Ah, if I could but remember!"

She worried and fretted so over the story that Ellen was always sorry to have her begin it. Sometimes the old grandmother almost cried.

Now as the child stood looking through the window at the rainy world outside, her thoughts were upon the story, for the grandmother had been very unhappy over it all day; Ellen had not been able to get her to talk or think of anything else.

The house was very quiet, for it was afternoon. The mother was busy in the sewing-room, grandmother was taking a nap, and nurse was crooning softly to the baby in the room across the hall.

Ellen had come to the nursery to get

a book of jingles; she was going to read aloud to her mother. Now as she turned from the window it occurred to her that she would put the bookcase in order before she went down to the sewing-room. That was just the thing to do on a rainy day.

She sat down before the shelves and began pulling the books out, now and then opening one to look at a picture or to straighten a bookmarker.

The nursery walls were covered with a flowered paper, and when Ellen had almost emptied the shelves she noticed that the paper back of them was of a different color from that on the rest of the room. It had not faded. The blue color between the vines looked soft and cloudlike, too, and almost as though it would melt away at a touch.

Ellen put her hand back to feel it.

Instead of touching a hard, cold wall as she had expected, her hand went right through between the vines as though there were nothing there.

Ellen rose to her knees and put both hands across the shelf. She found she could draw the vines aside just as though they were real. She even thought she caught a glimpse of skies and trees between them.

In haste she sprang to her feet and pushed the bookcase to one side so that she could squeeze in behind it.

She caught hold of the wall-paper vines and drew them aside, and then she stepped right through the wall and into the world beyond.

Chapter Two

Beyond the Wall

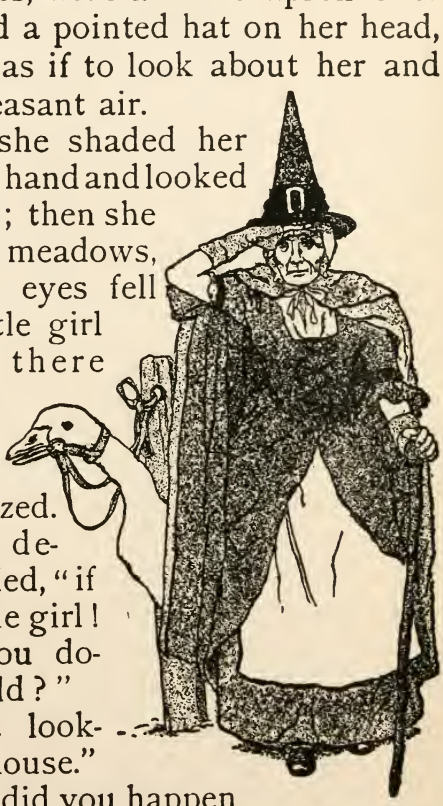
IT was not raining at all beyond the wall. Overhead was a soft, mild sky, neither sunny nor cloudy. Before her stretched a grassy green meadow, and far away in the distance was a dark line of forest.

Just at the foot of the meadow was a little house. It was such a curious little house that Ellen went nearer to look at it. It was not set solidly upon the ground, but stood upon four fowls' legs, so that you could look clear under it; and the roof was covered with shining feathers that overlapped like feathers upon the back of a duck. Beside the door, hitched to a post by a bridle just as a horse might be, was an enormous white gander.

While Ellen stood staring with all her eyes at the house and the gander, the

door opened, and a little old woman, in buckled shoes, with a white apron over her frock and a pointed hat on her head, stepped out, as if to look about her and enjoy the pleasant air.

Presently she shaded her eyes with her hand and looked up at the sky; then she looked at the meadows, and last her eyes fell upon the little girl who stood there staring at her. The old woman gazed and gazed.



"Well, I declare," she cried, "if it is n't a little girl! What are you doing here, child?"

"I 'm just looking at your house."

"But how did you happen to come here?"

"I came through the nursery wall. I did n't know it was soft before."

A number of queer-looking little people had come out from the house while Ellen and the old woman were talking, and they gathered about in a crowd and stared so hard and were so odd-looking that Ellen began to feel somewhat shy. They kept coming out and coming out until she wondered how the house could have held them all.

There was a little boy with a pig in his arms, and now and then the pig squealed shrilly. There was a maid with a cap and apron, and her sleeves were so full of round, heavy things that the seams looked ready to burst. A pocket that hung at her side was full, too, and bumped against her as she walked. She came quite close to Ellen, and the child could tell by the smell that the things in her sleeves and pocket were oranges. There was one who Ellen knew must be a king by the crown on his head; he was a jolly-looking fellow, and had

a pipe in one hand and a bowl in the other.

There were big people and little people, young people and old; and a dish and spoon came walking out with the rest. But what seemed almost the strangest of all to Ellen was to see an old lady come riding out through the door of the house on a white horse.

"I wonder where she keeps it," thought the little girl to herself. "I should n't think it would be very pleasant to have a horse in the house with you."

The old lady's hands were loaded with rings, and as the horse moved there was a jingling as of bells. The words of a nursery rhyme rang through Ellen's head in time to the jingling:—

"*Rings on her fingers*
And bells on her toes,
She shall have music
Wherever she goes."

"Why," she cried, "it 's the old lady

of Banbury Cross. And"—she looked around at the crowd—"why, I do believe they 're *all* out of Mother Goose rhymes."

"Of course they are," said the little old woman with the pointed hat. "What did you suppose would live in Mother Goose's house?"

"And are you Mother Goose?" asked Ellen.

"Yes, I am. Don't you think I look like the pictures?"

"But—but—I did n't know you were alive. I thought you were only a rhyme."

"Only a rhyme! Well, I should think not. How do you suppose there could be rhymes unless there was something to make them about?"

"And all the rest, too," said Ellen dreamily, looking about her. "'Tom, Tom, the piper's son,' and 'Dingty, Diddlety, my mammy's maid,' and 'Old King Cole'—why, they 're *all* alive. How queer it seems! I wonder if the stories are alive, too."

"Yes, just as alive as we are."

"And the story grandmother forgot—oh, *do* you suppose I could find that story?"

"The story she forgot!" answered Mother Goose thoughtfully. "What was it about?"

"Why, that's it; I don't know. Nobody knows only just grandmother, and she's forgotten."

Mother Goose shook her head. "If every one's forgotten it, I'm afraid it must be at the house of the Queerbodies. That's where they send all the forgotten stories; then they make them over into new ones."

"Could n't I go there to find it?"

"I don't know. I've never been there myself. Of course, they would n't let me in. But you're a real child. Maybe you could get in. Only, how would you get there? It's a long, long journey, through the forest and over hills and streams."

"I don't know," said Ellen. "I've

never journeyed very far; only just to Aunt Josephine's."

Mother Goose knitted her brows and began to think hard. Suddenly her face brightened. "I 'll tell you what I 'll do. I 'll lend you my gander; and he 'll carry you there in short order, however far it is."

"Oh, thank you, but I don't believe I could ride him! I 'd fall off, I 'm sure."

"No, you would n't. He goes as smoothly as a dream goose, and almost as fast. Yes, I 'll lend him to you. But there 's one thing I 'd like you to do for me in return when you reach the house of the Queerbodies."

"What is that?"

"I 'd like you to ask about a rhyme I used to have. I think they must have it there, for I 've lost it; and if it has n't been made over yet, perhaps you could manage to get it for me."

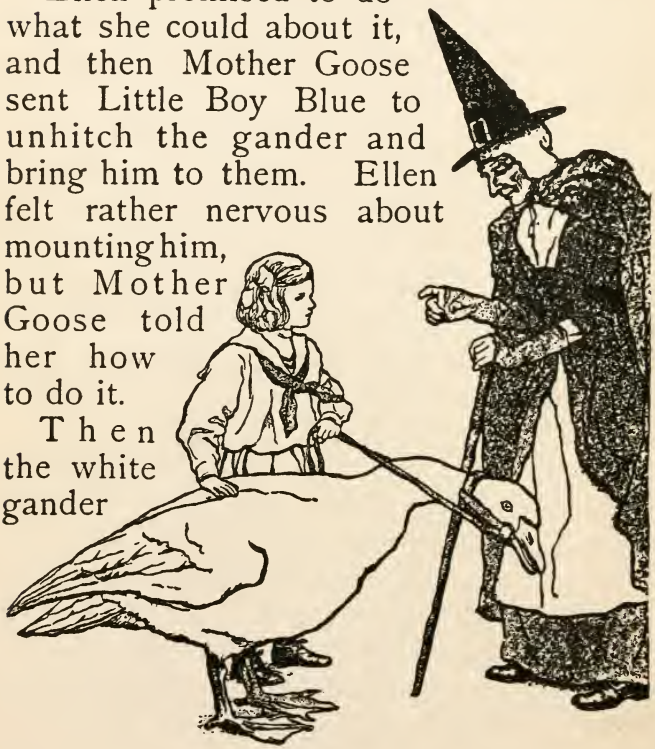
"What 's its name?" asked Ellen.

"Well, it has n't any name, but it looks like this: —

" Johnnykin learned to ride the wind,
But he would n't let any one on behind.
But the wind ran away
With Johnny one day,
And that was n't such fun I have heard him say."

Ellen promised to do what she could about it, and then Mother Goose sent Little Boy Blue to unhitch the gander and bring him to them. Ellen felt rather nervous about mounting him, but Mother Goose told her how to do it.

Then the white gander



spread his wings. The wind rustled through them like the sound made by the leaves of a book when they are turned. Up, up rose the gander as smoothly as a bubble rises through the air and then away he flew toward the dark line of forest that Ellen saw in the distance.

Chapter Three

The Five Little Pigs and the Goat

ON and on went the white gander so smoothly and swiftly that the country slipped away beneath just as the leaves of a book do when they slip from under your finger too fast for you to see the print or pictures.

"I wonder what that is," said Ellen as a spot of red shone out among the green beneath.

The gander stayed his wings so that Ellen could look.

It was a little red brick house. Around it were other houses that looked as though they were built of sods. They had chimneys and from two or three of these chimneys thin lines of smoke rose through the still air.

As the gander hovered above them

from a knoll a little way beyond there suddenly sounded a shrill and piteous squeaking.

"Oh, what's that?" cried Ellen. "It must be a pig and I'm afraid some one is hurting it. Oh dear!"

"Do you want to go and see mistress?" asked the gander.

Ellen said she did, so the gander turned in that direction.

When they reached the knoll they found that it was indeed a pig that was making the noise, but Ellen could not see why it was shrieking so. It sat there all alone under an oak tree and with its pink nose lifted to the sky and its eyes shut it wept aloud. The tears trickled down its bristly cheeks.

Suddenly it stopped squeaking, and getting up began quietly hunting about for acorns, and craunching them as though it found them very good.

"What's the matter, you poor little pig?" asked Ellen, looking down at it from the gander's back.

She had not spoken with any idea of receiving any answer.

The little pig looked up when he heard her voice. As soon as he saw her he sat down and began squeaking so shrilly that Ellen felt like covering her ears.

"Week! Week! Week!" he cried. "Can't find my way home."

For a moment Ellen was so surprised at hearing the pig speak that she could not say anything. Then she asked, "Where do you live?" But the pig did not hear her. "Where do you live?" she repeated in a louder tone; then she shouted, "Hush!" so loudly that the little pig stopped short with his mouth half open and the tears still standing in his eyes.

"Where do you live?" she asked for the third time.

"I live over by the wood in the little sod house next to the brick one," answered the little pig.

"Well, isn't that it there?" and

Ellen pointed to the sod houses over which she had just flown.

The little pig looked. "Why, so it is," he cried. Then curling up his little tail he trotted away in that direction.

The white gander flew beside him and Ellen talked as they went. "Why did n't you see it before?"

"I was coming home from market with my brother; he 's quite a big pig; and I stopped to eat some acorns, so he said he would n't wait for me any longer, and he went on and that lost me."

"But if you 'd just looked you would have seen it."

"I could n't look because I was hunting for acorns, and then I began to cry, and then I hunted for some more acorns."

It sounded so foolish, Ellen could n't help laughing. "I think I 'd better go home with you or you may get lost again," she said. Presently she asked, "How many brothers have you?"

"Four," answered the pig. "One of them's going to have roast beef for dinner." Suddenly he sat down and began to cry again.

"What in the world's the matter now?" asked Ellen in desperation.

"Oweek! Oweek! Maybe he's eaten it all."

"Well you'd better hurry home and see. If you keep on sitting here and crying, I know you won't get any."

This thought made the little pig jump up and start toward home as fast as his short legs would carry him.

When they reached the sod house next to the brick one another pig was standing in the doorway looking out. He was larger than Ellen's companion.

He stared hard at the little girl and her gander, but when he spoke it was to the little pig. "You naughty little pig, why didn't you come home?"

The little pig did not answer this question. "Has Middling finished his roast beef?" he asked.

"There's some fat left."

As the little pig hurried in through the door, Ellen asked of the other, "Is this your house?"

"Yes," grunted the pig.

Three other pigs had appeared in the doorway by this time. They all stared at the little girl.

"It's a dear little house," said Ellen.

"Would you like to look inside?" asked the largest pig.

Ellen said she would.

She slipped from the gander and the pigs made way for her to go in; but she only looked through the doorway, without entering. The littlest pig was seated at a table eating beef fat as fast as he could. Ellen did not think he ate very nicely.

"It's a dear little house," she repeated.

Then she looked about her. At the window of one of the other houses she caught a glimpse of a head. It looked like a cat's head.

"Who live in all these other houses?" she asked.

"Well, in that brick house lives another pig," answered the pig they called Middling. "Sometimes he comes to see us, but he does n't have *very* much to do with us, because he 's in a story; a *real* story you know, and we 're only in a rhyme."

"What story is he in?" asked Ellen.

"The story of the wolf that huffed and puffed and blew the house in. He had two brothers, and one built a house of leaves and one built a house of straw, and the wolf came and blew their houses in and ate them up, but this one built his house of bricks, so when the wolf came to it — "

"Oh, yes, I know that story," interrupted Ellen, for she had heard it so often she was rather tired of it. "Who lives in the house beyond that?"

"The seven little kids. A wolf really did swallow them once, but their mother cut him open with her scissors while he was asleep and they all got out."

"And who lives in the little furry

house with the chimneys like pointed ears?"

"An old cat. She's nothing but a rhyme. She's very particular, though. Why, one time she was just as *mad* at her kittens, just because they lost some mittens she had knitted for them."

So Middling went on talking of all the people who lived in the village, while Ellen listened and wondered. It seemed so strange she could hardly believe it was all true.

"What fun you must have together!" she said at last.

The pigs looked at each other and grunted. "We would have," said a slim pig that the others called Ringling, "if it was n't for an old goat that lives in a cave down at the end of the street."

"Oh, but he's a naughty one," broke in Thumbie, the fattest pig. "He's always doing mischief and playing tricks on us."

"That was a bad trick he played on you, Thumbie," said Middling.

"What was that?" asked the little girl.

"Well, we were all away except Thumbie, and he was asleep in the doorway, and the old goat saw him and brought a paint pot and painted his back so it looked like a big fat face lying there. So when we came home we did n't know what it was, and we were scared, but Thumbie woke up and began to get up, and Ringling she squeaked, 'Run! run! Big face is after us,' so we all began to run. Thumbie he saw us all running, so he got scared too, and he ran after us, and the faster we ran the faster he ran. After a while he tripped and fell, and then he began to cry and we knew who it was."

"Oh, yes, he 's as mean as mean can be," went on Middling. "Why, one time when our raspberries were ripe old Shave-head came here — "

"Who 's Shave-head?" interrupted Ellen.

"Oh, he 's the goat. Old Shave-head came here and asked if he could n't have

some of our raspberries, and we said yes he could if he'd give us a present, and he said he would, so he went home and brought a big pannikin and put it on the table. It was covered.

"Then he went out in the garden and began to pick raspberries as fast as ever he could.

"We all sat round and wondered what was in the pannikin.

"Littlesie guessed it was acorns, and Thumbie thought it was apple parings, and I thought it was pancakes because it was in a pannikin."

"And what was it?" asked Ellen, very much interested.

"Well, it was a joke," said Middling slowly. "He'd fixed up a sort of big jumping-jack inside, and when we took off the lid it jumped out at us and said, 'Woof!' It scared us so we all squeaked and jumped back in our chairs, and the chairs upset and down we came, *clatterly-slam-bang!*"

Ellen could not help laughing at that.

"He painted all our dolls, too," said Fatty, "and almost spoiled them."

"Have you dolls?" cried Ellen in surprise.

"Oh, yes, indeed. I'll show them to you," and Thumbie ran into the house to get them. When he brought them out Ellen thought they were the cunningest little things for dolls that she had ever seen. They were little wooden pigs just like the real pigs themselves only very small. But they were painted in the funniest way. One was bright purple with a yellow

nose, and one was pea-green with red legs, another was sky-blue spotted all over with pink, and the other two were just as funny-looking.

After Ellen had looked at them she asked, "Did the goat paint them that way?"

"Yes, he did, and I think it's real mean." It was Middling who answered.

"What are some of the other tricks he plays?"

Middling thought awhile. "I don't remember any more."

"There was that Fourth-o'-July trick he played on the mother of the seven kids," suggested Ringling.

"Oh, yes. That was mean too; she's so good. She bakes us cookies sometimes and then she gives the old goat some. She's always good to him and nobody likes him either."

"What was the trick?"

"He took torpedoes and put them all down the path at the Mother Goat's. It was a gravel path, and she thought

the torpedoes were just part of it. Fourth-o'-July morning she came out to get a pail of water and when she struck a torpedo with her hard hoof it went off, bang! It scared her so she jumped up in the air, and when she came down it was on some more torpedoes. Bang! bang! they went. Every time she made a leap and came down some more torpedoes went off. Mother Goat was so scared she went to bed for all the rest of the day, and it was Fourth-o'-July, too. I just wish we could drive him away."

"So do we," cried all the other pigs. "Then we'd be happy. He's just an ugly old baldhead, anyway."

"I never saw a bald goat," said Ellen.

"His master shaved him," said Ringling, "he was so bad."

"Why? What did he do?"

"Well, his master had three sons, and he sent them one at a time to take the goat out to pasture. Every time before the boy brought the goat home he would

ask, 'Goat, have you had enough?' And the goat would answer:

"'*I am satisfied quite;*
No more can I bite.'

Then the boy would bring him home and put him in the stable. But the father always wanted to be sure his goat had had enough, so he would go out himself and say, 'Goat have you had enough to-day?' Then it would answer:

"'*I only jumped about the fields,*
And never found a bite.'

It made the father so angry to think his sons should have treated the goat that way that he drove them away from home."

"I know," Ellen interrupted. "Then when the father found out that the goat had deceived him and made him send his sons away—"

"He shaved the goat's head and drove it away with a yard-stick," cried Middling, raising his voice. He wanted to

tell the story himself. "Then it hid in a bear's cave—"

"I know."

"And the bear was afraid to go home, for he could just see the goat's eyes shining in the cave and he didn't know what it was, and he was afraid to go in; but a bee said it would see, so it went in and stung the goat on the head and then the goat jumped out of the cave and ran till it came here, and I do wish somebody would take it away."

"I would," said Ellen, "if I knew where to take it." She was not afraid of the goat, for she had a pet one at home that drew a little wagon.

Littlesie, who had finished his roast beef and had come to the door, looked frightened. "You could n't," he cried. "Why Baldhead would butt you right over if you tried to touch him."

"Mistress," said the white gander, "I know how you could make the goat go away."

"How?" asked Ellen.

Then the gander told his plan, while Ellen and all the five pigs listened.

"Good, good," cried the pigs when they had heard it, and they clapped their hoofs and leaped up into the air.

Ellen, too, thought it a good plan and said she would do everything as the gander told her.

The pigs showed her where the goat lived, and then they ran back home, for the gander said it would be better for Ellen and him to go to see the goat by themselves.

It was in a sort of a cave under a hillock that he lived. The cave had but one window and that was only a hole through the earth, but it had a doorway and a wooden door.

There Ellen knocked and a rough voice within asked, "Who is that knocking at my door?"

And Ellen answered, "Some one who never was here before."

Again the rough voice spoke:

"Then lift the latch that I may see
Who dares to come and knock for me."

Then Ellen lifted the latch and after a moment's hesitation pushed open the door and stepped inside.

At first it seemed so dark in the cave after the brightness outside that she could see nothing, but as her eyes grew

used to the gloom she saw that one end of the cave was almost filled with straw, and upon this was sitting a very large and very ugly goat.

His hair was rough and shaggy; his head was shaved and his little eyes looked at Ellen fiercely from under his curving horns.

"What do you mean by coming and disturbing me here in my cave?" he asked.

His voice was so very harsh that for a moment Ellen was rather frightened, but she remembered her pet goat at home and spoke up bravely:

"If you please, I 've come to ask you whether you won't go away and find some other place to live."

"*Go!*" cried the goat, half rising. "Me go?"

"Yes," answered Ellen. "You see, you tease and bother the animals that live here so much that they all want you to go, and I told the pigs I would come and tell you."

"Then you can tell them," howled the goat in a rage, "that I'll never go. Have I sent three sons packing from their father's house and frightened a bear from his cave to be ordered out of my house at last by some pigs?"

"I don't know," said Ellen, "but you'll have to go anyway."

"I won't go," howled the goat.

"Yes, you'll have to," said Ellen.

"But I won't," howled the goat.

Then Ellen did what the gander had told her to do. She put her hands to her mouth and buzzed into them like a bee.

The goat started up as though he had been shot. Ever since he had been stung out of the bear's cave there was nothing in the world that he feared like a bee. He began to shiver and shake, and his bald head turned quite pale, "Oh don't sting me," he cried. "Please don't, and I'll do whatever you wish."

"Then come with me," said Ellen, "and I won't hurt you."

"What are you going to do with me," asked the goat quite meekly, getting up and coming to her.

"I don't know just yet, but you can't stay here any longer. I 'll try to find a good home for you somewheres."

Then she fastened a stout twine, that the pigs had given her, about the goat's neck, and led him forth.

The animals in the village had heard from the pigs how Ellen had gone to try to get the old goat to go away, and they were all standing at their doors watching.

They had expected to see Ellen and the gander come running from the cave with the old goat butting them.

How surprised they were to see their enemy come out trotting meekly at Ellen's heels, following wherever she chose to lead it. They all murmured together of their surprise but they were still too much afraid of the goat to shout or show the delight they felt.

Ellen nodded shyly to the animals as she walked down the street.

When she reached the pigs' house they were all watching for her. Middling ran out and pushed something into her hand. "It's a present for you," he whispered. Then he ran back to join the others, but he was so glad the goat was going that he could not help jumping up into the air and squeaking as he ran.

The present he had given Ellen was the prettiest of the little wooden pigs; the one that was painted sky-blue with pink spots.

Chapter Four

Up in the Cloud-Land

ELLEN walked on toward the forest, followed by the white gander and the goat. She wondered what she could do with the goat. She could not take it with her, and if she turned it loose it would go and worry some other animals, she was sure.

Over toward the right at the very edge of the wood was a house. Ellen thought perhaps the people who lived there would take care of the goat, so she went over toward it.

When she reached the house, she found it was a very comfortable one with a porch covered with vines, and a stable and out-buildings at the back.

On the porch sat a gray-haired woman dressed in silk. She was looking up toward the quiet sky and listening to music that sounded from within the house. Ellen had never heard such beautiful music in all her life. As long as it sounded she could do nothing but stand and listen. Through the open window the little girl could see the top of a golden harp. She supposed some one must be playing on it, but she had never known before that any one in the world could play as beautifully as that.

When the music stopped the woman on the porch stirred and sighed. Then she lowered her eyes and her gaze fell upon Ellen. She rose and came to the edge of the porch. "Good-morning, child," she said. "Did you want to see me?"

"Yes," said Ellen. "I wanted to know whether you did n't want a goat."

"Why, no," answered the woman with some surprise, "I don't. We have all

the animals about the place that we want."

"I wish you *would* take this one," urged Ellen. "I don't know what to do with it."

"How do you come to be leading it about the country? Is it your goat?"

"Not exactly." She began to tell the woman all her story of how she had followed the little pig to the village; of how she had found the animals were being worried by the goat, and of how she had made it come away with her. It all sounded so strange, Ellen was half afraid the woman would not believe it. She did not seem to think it surprising, however; but when Ellen had ended she shook her head. "No," she said; "we would n't want such a mischievous animal about, I 'm sure; but I 'll ask my son." Then she called, "Jack, Jack!"

In answer a tall, stout lad came to the door. "What is it, mother?" he asked.

"Here 's a child who has a goat, and

she says this, that, and the other" (and the woman repeated Ellen's story). "Now the end of the matter is, she wants to leave the goat here with us."

"I don't see how we can —" began the lad slowly, when suddenly he stopped and listened intently with a strange, scared look on his face.

His mother caught him by the arm. "What is it, Jack?" she cried. "What are you listening to? It is n't —"

Jack nodded without answering.

And now all listened, and Ellen knew that a sound she had heard some minutes before, without particularly noticing it, was the voice of some one weeping and complaining. The voice was very faint and far off, but in the silence the little girl could make out the words, "I can't get down! I can't get down! Woe is me, but it 's lonely up here." Ellen could not tell where the voice came from, but it seemed to come from the sky. There was silence for a moment and then it began again lamenting and weeping.

The woman threw her silk apron over her head and began to rock herself and sob. "Oh, the poor thing! I can't stand it, Jack," she cried. "You 've got to get her down somehow. You 've *got* to."

The lad had turned somewhat pale. "What can I do, mother?" he asked. "You know I 've tried everything I know, but there 's never a ladder in all the world that would reach that far, and we have no more such beans as those."

"Who is it?" asked Ellen in a whisper.

The woman put down her apron and wiped her eyes. "It 's that giant's poor wife," she answered. "You see it all came from Jack's selling our cow for a hatful of beans. I punished him well for it, but what good did that do? Then he planted them, and one of them grew so fast it grew right up to the sky."

"Oh; Jack and the Beanstalk!" cried Ellen.

"Then nothing would do but Jack must climb up and see what was at the top

of the beanstalk. He climbed and he climbed," the woman went on, her voice broken by sobs, "until at last he climbed right up to the sky. There he found a wonderful country and a giant had a castle there. The giant was very rich. Besides his other treasures he had two bags of golden money, a golden hen, and a golden harp that played of itself. Perhaps you heard the harp playing as you came up."

"Yes, I did," said Ellen.

"All these things Jack managed to steal, one at a time, and brought them down the beanstalk with him. That was all right enough, for those things had once belonged to Jack's father, and had been stolen from him by the giant. Jack had no trouble in getting away with the bags of money and the hen, but the time he brought the harp the giant discovered him and chased him. He came clambering down the beanstalk after the lad, and would have killed us both without doubt, but Jack ran in and got a hatchet

and chopped down the beanstalk. The giant, who was only half way down, fell with it and was killed, and I never was sorry for him a moment, for he was a wicked, cruel giant. The only thing I grieve about is his poor wife. She was so good to Jack, and now she is left there all alone in the giant's house, and no way of getting her down again, as far as I can see."

The woman began to sob again more bitterly than ever. As for Jack, he turned away and, putting his arm against the wall, hid his face in it.

The white gander plucked Ellen by the skirt. "Mistress, Mistress! Come with me a moment," he whispered.

Ellen followed him a little apart.

"I think I might help you to get the giant's wife down," he said.

"How would you do it?"

"Do you mount upon my back and I'll fly up there with you, for wings can fly where never ladder can reach. When we're once up there

we 'll soon find some way to get her down."

Ellen was pleased with this advice, and returning to the porch she told Jack and his mother what the gander had said.

They were filled with joy and gratitude. "If you only will get her down there is nothing you can ask for that we will not give you," cried the mother, "even the golden harp itself."

Ellen seated herself upon the gander's back and gathered the reins into her fingers. Then the bird spread its strong wings and rose in the air. Up and up it flew. The sky seemed to grow nearer and Jack and his mother and the old bald goat shrank to mere specks below.

Up, up, until Ellen grew dizzy with the height and closed her eyes.

There was a slight jar, and then the gander spoke, "Mistress, we are here."

Ellen unclosed her eyes and looked about her. She was in a wide gray country, such as she had never seen

before. Everything about her was gray, the trees, the grass, the streams and sky — everything; and not far away was a gigantic, shadowy gray castle.

Close to where the gander had alighted stood a little old woman with her hands clasped. She was looking at Ellen with wide, wondering eyes. Presently she came nearer, and timidly stretching out her hand she touched Ellen with her finger. "Are you real, or are you only a dream?" she asked.

"Why I 'm real, of course," said Ellen.

The little old woman caught her by the arm and began to sob with joy. "Oh, I 'm so glad, so glad," she cried. "I 've been so lonely up here. You won't go away and leave me here alone again, will you?"

"I 've come to take you down," said Ellen.

"Oh, that 's better still. It 's many a long and weary year since my foot has been on the dear green grass. But how will you get me down?"

"I thought maybe the gander would carry us," said Ellen, but the white gander shook his head.

"No, no; my wings are not strong enough for that, and if I should fall we would all three break our necks."

"Then what shall we do?"

"I have a rope," said the little old woman timidly. "While I have been up here alone I spent my time making it, and now I think it is long enough. I often thought I would try to lower myself to the earth by it, but I was afraid."

Ellen looked at the gander. "That might do," he said. "Bring it here, and bring a basket, too; the biggest one you have."

The little old woman hastened away, and in a short time returned with the rope and a basket.

"Now tie them together," said the gander.

Ellen and the old woman did this, seeing to it that the knots were tight.

Then the white gander made Ellen twist the rope around a tree, so that the basket would hang down just over the cloudy edge of the sky country.

"Now get in the basket," said the gander.

The little old woman looked rather frightened, but she did as she was bid. Then the gander and Ellen began to let the rope slip, and as it slipped the basket slowly sank from sight. The weight did not seem great because of the rope's being twisted about the tree.

Down and down went the basket and the little old woman in it; down and down went the rope. Ellen thought they never would get done letting it slip. At last there was no more pull on it. "She has reached the ground," said the gander. "And now, mistress, get on my back and we will fly down."

"Oh, I'm almost afraid, we are so far up."

"Shut your eyes and hold me by the neck."

Ellen seated herself upon the gander's back. Then she clasped her arms about its neck and closed her eyes, as she was bid and then the gander flew out over the edge of the cloud-land.

It took but a little while for them to find themselves once more down in front of the vine-covered porch, and there was the little old woman with Jack and his mother, and they were joyful indeed.

"And now what will you have as a reward?" asked Jack's mother. "Will you have the golden harp? Or will you have a bag of golden money? Or what?"

But Ellen said she would not take anything, for she did not wish to burden down the gander. All she asked was that they would keep the goat and be kind to him, and that they would tell her how to get to the Queerbodies' House.

"The first I will gladly do," said Jack's mother, "but as to the second, all I can tell you is that the Queerbodies' House

lies on the other side of the forest; but if you ask the forest folk, no doubt they can direct you how to go."

"This you must take at least," cried the little old woman; "it is all I brought from the gray country." She lifted her skirt, and from the pocket of the petticoat beneath she drew out an egg. It was just the size of a hen's egg and shaped like one, but Ellen exclaimed with admiration when she saw it, for it was all of pure yellow gold, and shone like glass. "Take it," said the little old woman, "I have no need of it now, for Jack and his mother have promised that I shall live here with them and share all that they have. You see you can easily carry this."

Ellen took the egg and thanked the little old woman. Then bidding good-by to all, she seated herself upon her gander, and away they flew so swiftly that almost immediately the vine-covered house was far away, and they found themselves at the edge of the deep, green forest.

Chapter Five

The House of the Seven Little Dwarfs

"MISTRESS," said the gander, "you will have to alight now if we are to go in here in search of the forest folk. It would only bruise my wings for nothing if I tried to fly where the trees are so thick."

"Very well," answered Ellen, stepping down from his back to the ground. "And I do believe," she added, "that I see a house now beyond those bushes. Don't you?"

"Yes, I believe I do," said the gander. "Let us go over in that direction and see."

A very short walk brought them to the house. It was a very cunning little house, with a door and windows just about large enough for a large child.

Ellen went up to the door and knocked. She could hear some one rattling about

inside and moving things around, but there was no answer to her rap, so she knocked again.

A moment's silence followed, and then the door was suddenly and violently

thrown open. There stood a little dwarf holding a great wooden spoon in his hand as though it were a club. His eyes had a scared look.

"Who are you, and what do you want here?" he cried, in a voice that he tried to make very big and bold, though it trembled in spite of him.

"I am Ellen," answered the little girl, "and I stopped here to ask if you could tell me the way to the Queerbodies' house."

"Oh, is that all," said the dwarf with a sigh of relief. "I was afraid when you first knocked that you might be one of those bad underground dwarfs. But come in; come in. I don't know the way myself, but maybe one of my brothers may. They'll be here soon if you'll come in and wait a bit. I'm just cooking dinner for them."

"Thank you," said Ellen. "May my gander come in too?"

"Yes, yes; bring him in."

As Ellen followed the dwarf into the

house she looked about her and thought it was the very cunningest little house she had ever seen. In the middle of the room was a long low table set with seven wooden bowls, seven wooden forks, and seven wooden spoons. Around the table were seven little chairs just the right size for children or dwarfs. There were also a wooden dresser painted red, a dough-trough, a clock, and a settee; but everything was small. Ellen thought what fun it would be to keep house there.

The only big thing in the room was a huge black pot that stood on the stove, and in which something was cooking. The dwarf was obliged to stand on a stool in order to reach over and stir it with his big spoon.

"Porridge," he said looking over his shoulder at Ellen. Then he repeated in a tone of contempt, "*Porridge!*" Giving it a last stir he stepped down from the stool, and using all his strength he pushed the pot to the back part of the

stove. Then he came and sat down opposite to Ellen.

"I suppose you think porridge is a strange thing to have for dinner," he said, still speaking bitterly. "So do I. And to think I had a good dinner all ready and cooked just a little while ago!"

"What became of it?" asked Ellen.

"Why I just went a little way into the forest to see if my brothers were coming, and in that little time that I was away those bad underground dwarfs were here, and when I came back the meat was gone, and the potatoes were gone, and ashes were dropped in the soup, so it was fit for nothing but to be thrown out. Oh, they 're bad ones, they are."

"So then you cooked some porridge?"

"It was the best I could do at this hour of the day. There 'll be grumbling enough about it when my brothers come home. Those underground dwarfs are always up to some mischief or other. They were n't so much trouble — indeed

they did n't trouble us at all as long as the good Bear Prince was about. They were too much afraid of him even if he was enchanted; but he broke the enchantment and married Snow-White and went to live in his castle, far away. Now the underground dwarfs have no one to be afraid of, and we dare n't leave the house alone a minute or they 're up to some mischief."

Ellen sat staring at the dwarf. She knew the story of that Bear Prince very well. It was all about how he came to the house where Rose-Red and Snow-White lived and asked for shelter one bitter winter night. He was in the shape of a bear then because he had been enchanted by a wicked dwarf, but afterward he caught the dwarf and killed him, and then his bear-skin dropped from him. So he came back to his true shape of a handsome prince and married little Snow-White. Ellen knew the story almost by heart, but never before had she believed that it was really true.

"And did you really see that enchanted Prince with your very own eyes?" she asked.

"Oh, yes; we knew him well while he was a bear. Many and many a time has he lain there before that very stove snoring away. But after he once began going to the widow's house he stopped coming here. The widow was the mother of Snow-White and Rose-Red.

"Perhaps it was just as well though, anyway. He might have frightened our own beautiful Snowdrop, for she was keeping house for us then."

"Who was Snowdrop?" asked Ellen.

"She was the daughter of a king, but she had a wicked stepmother who hated her. The stepmother gave her to a huntsman bidding him kill her, but the man had pity on the poor child. He helped her to escape and then killed a deer and took its heart to the wicked stepmother, pretending it was Snowdrop's heart. Then Snowdrop came here to live with us. We sheltered her

and loved her, but the wicked stepmother hunted her out and came here to take the poor child's life."

"Oh, I know," cried Ellen eagerly. "It 's the story of the magic mirror."

But the dwarf went on as though he had not heard her. His thoughts were all of those past days when Snowdrop had made their little house bright with her beauty. "Yes, she came here, that wicked Queen. She came in disguise while we were away, pretending to have laces and stays for sale. We had warned Snowdrop to beware of all strangers, but the child was so good and innocent herself that she could not think harm of any one.

"She talked to the stepmother and looked at her wares without knowing her. She bought a beautiful pair of stays, too. Then the wicked Queen said she would lace them up for her. She laced them, and suddenly drew the cord so tight that Snowdrop could not breathe, but fell down as though dead.

"She was not dead, however, and when we came home we cut the cord so she could breathe, and so we saved her.

"Once the wicked one brought a poisoned comb and gave it to Snowdrop, and as soon as it was put in her hair Snowdrop fell down as though dead. Then too we saved her, drawing out the comb.

"But the third time we could do nothing. It was a piece of a poisoned apple that the stepmother brought her. Snowdrop took a bite of the apple and it lodged in her throat. When we came home, there she lay on the floor as though dead and we could not tell what it was that ailed her.

"We put her in a crystal casket, meaning to keep her always.

"But a prince came by that way and saw Snowdrop lying there motionless. Though she could not move nor speak he loved her so dearly that when he begged for her we could not refuse him. We gave her to him and he carried her

away, but on the journey the apple jolted out and she opened her eyes and spoke and lived.

"She is a great queen now, but she has never forgotten us. Every month she comes to see us in her great chariot drawn by six white horses and with outriders. Oh, you should see her then, so grand and beautiful. But she is not proud. She sits and eats with us just as she used to do. Yes, and she cooked us a dinner, too, one time. Cooked it with her own royal hands, laughing all the while."

"Oh, I *wish* I could see her," cried Ellen.

The dwarf sat smiling to himself and rubbing one hand over the hairy back of the other.

Suddenly he started from his thoughts. "There come my brothers," he cried.

Gathering up the wooden bowls he carried them over to the porridge pot and began to fill them.

There was a sound of footsteps and

voices outside, and presently in through the doorway came six more sturdy dwarfs, all looking as like the one by the stove as one pea is like another. They all stopped and stared at Ellen. "Who is this?" asked one of them.

"Oh, it's just a child from the real world," said the dwarf by the stove. "Nothing to be afraid of. She just stopped here to ask her way to the Queerbodies' house, but I don't know how to tell her."

"I know the way," said one of the new-comers. "But sit down, child; you must have a bite and a sup with us before you go."

"Thank you, I don't think I'm hungry," said Ellen.

"What's this?" cried another dwarf, eying the porridge that had been set before him. "Where's our good dinner of soup and meat?"

While the stay-at-home told his story of the lost dinner the looks of the other dwarfs grew blacker and blacker. "See

now," cried one of them, striking his hairy fist upon the table; "'t is just as I tell you; those underground dwarfs grow more bold and mischievous every day. There 's nothing for it but for two of us to stay at home, one to cook and one to act as guard."

"But, brother, how can we do that?" asked another. "Our hands are few enough as it is, for the work to be done."

"If there were but some way to frighten them off," said another mournfully. "But I don't see how we could do that."

"Why don't you make a scarecrow to frighten them away? That 's the way we do at home," Ellen suggested.

"What is a scarecrow?" asked another dwarf hopefully, but when Ellen told him he shook his head. "No, no; they 're so quick they 'd guess in a minute that we were trying to trick them, and that it could n't move."

"Well, I know what we 'll do," cried Ellen. "We won't make a scarecrow;

we 'll make a scare-gander. We 'll dress the gander up like a figure and it shall sit there quietly, and then, when the dwarfs come in to look at it, it can fly up and beat them with its wings so they 'll never dare to come back again."

The gander stretched its great wings up and beat them loudly. "Yes, yes," it hissed.

"That might do," said the dwarfs; "but first we 'll have our dinners, for we have been working hard and we 're hungry."

So, as soon as they had finished eating their porridge they dressed the white gander. Ellen put her hat on its head and her shoes on its feet. They tied an apron that had belonged to Snowdrop about his neck, and put on a veil that hung down over his beak. Then they set him in a chair, and he looked so funny that Ellen could hardly help laughing.

"Now we'll all go back to our work," said the oldest dwarf, "and when those

evil ones count that all seven of us have gone they'll soon be here to see what mischief they can do about the house."

So the dwarfs all put on their caps, and, shouldering their drills and picks, off they started, leaving the white gander sitting in the chair.

As for Ellen, she hid in the dresser, keeping the door just a crack open so she could see out.

She had only been in there a few minutes when there was a noise at the window and an evil looking dwarf peered in. He peered all about the kitchen and then he cried, "It's all right. They've all gone and left the house to take care of itself. They'll be sorry enough they left it when they come back. Quick! In, all of us, and see what mischief we can do."

With that he dropped back from the window, and in a minute a great crowd of dwarfs came tumbling in through the door. They were not as large as the

good dwarfs, but they looked so spiteful and evil that Ellen was frightened and wished she and her white gander were well out of it.

"What mischief shall we begin with?" cried one.

"Let's pull all the pots and pans out of the dresser first," said another, "and see what ones we can break."

"Yes, yes," cried still others.

Several of them started over toward the dresser where Ellen was hidden, and if they had found her there it would have gone hard with her, but at the same moment one of them cried, "Oh, look here! Just see this puppet they've dressed up. Did they think they could scare us with that? Let's tear it to pieces before we do anything else."

All the dwarfs rushed pell-mell toward the chair where the gander sat, dressed in Ellen's hat and shoes and with a veil over its face. It sat as still as a stone until they were close upon it. Then up rose the great white gander

with a hiss. It spread its wide strong wings, and before the dwarfs could escape it had brought them down with such a blow that three of the dwarfs were knocked head over heels. The rest cried out in terror at the sight, and hastened towards the door, but the goose was after them.

It beat and buffeted them with its wings and hissed so piercingly in their ears that they did not know what was after them. Out through the door they went and away over stump and through brier with the great white gander after them. The forest re-echoed with their harsh cries of fear.

The good dwarfs heard it, and came hastening home to learn how Ellen's plot had succeeded. Just after they came in, back came the gander, and if ever a bird laughed it was laughing then.

"Mistress, did I not beat them well?"

"You did indeed," said Ellen, and all the dwarfs agreed with a loud voice.

Then Ellen showed them how to take a pillow and dress it up as the gander had been dressed. They set it in a chair and moved the chair in front of the window, so that when you look at it from the outside it was exactly as though it were the gander itself sitting there. "I think they 'll be afraid ever to come near the house again as long as that is there," said Ellen.

"They will indeed," cried all the dwarfs.

Then the child again begged them to tell her which way she was to go to find the Queerbodies' house.

"That 's easily told," answered the oldest dwarf. "All you have to do is to watch the leaves and follow the way they turn, and that will soon bring you where you want to go."

"How queer!" cried Ellen. "With us the leaves turn every which way, as the wind happens to blow."

"I don't see much use in that," said the dwarf. "I don't see how you ever

find your way through the woods if that's the way they do. Come, look here."

He led Ellen out under the trees in front of the house. There was no breath of air and the leaves all hung motionless. "Now take a few steps," said the dwarf. Ellen did so and immediately all the leaves stirred and began pointing toward the right, like wise little green fingers. "That's your way," said the dwarf. "Only remember and follow the direction they point out and you can't lose it."

Ellen thanked the kindly dwarfs, and she and her gander started briskly off toward the right.

On and on they went, and after a while they passed close to where there was a great heap of rocks; something kept bobbing about back of this heap, now appearing, now disappearing. At first Ellen thought it was a big bird, but as she went nearer the gander spoke: "Mistress, it's one of those wicked dwarfs."

Ellen stopped short, feeling rather frightened, but now the dwarf climbed on top of the rock and called to her: "Child, child, did you see a little house in the woods as you came along?"

"Yes, I did," answered Ellen.

"And did you stop there?"

"Yes, I did."

"And did you see anything of the big doll that beats you with flails?" He meant the gander and its wings.

"Oh, yes," said Ellen; "I saw that too."

"And is it still there?"

"No, they have n't that one, but they have another doll half as big again. It sits by the window, and if you 'll go and look you 'll see it there now."

"No, no," cried the dwarf. "If that 's true we 'll never go near the house again," and away he went, hopping over the rocks and disappearing in a big crack, and Ellen saw no more of him or his kind.

Chapter Six

The Great Gray Wolf

ON and on went Ellen and the gander, following the pointing of the leaves, and all the while the forest kept growing deeper and greener and lonelier.

There were no flowers now as there had been at first, but here and there on the trees or ground grew wonderful fungi. Some were yellow as gold, some were red as blood, and still others were streaked and spotted as beautifully as sea-shells. The only flowers to be seen were the wax-white "Indian-pipes" and there were whole clumps of them.

Ellen had just stooped to pick some, when suddenly the gander hissed, and at the same moment a harsh voice spoke so close to her ear that it made her start, "Good morning!"

Ellen glanced around, and there, standing close to her, was an enormous gray wolf, ragged and scarred. The sound of his paws had been so muffled by the moss that she had not heard him coming.

"Good morning," answered Ellen, her heart beating a little faster at sight of him.

"Where are you going this pleasant day?" asked the wolf.

"I am on my way to the Queerbodies' house."

"The Queerbodies! I never heard of them. Are they good to eat?" said the wolf. Then he added hastily, "No, no; I don't mean that. I meant are they pleasant, merry people?"

"I don't know," answered Ellen. "I've never seen them, and I'm not sure whether I can find them at all. But if I mean to get to their house to-day I think I'd better be going; so good-bye," and she began to walk on, for she did not like to be there in that lonely spot with a great gray wolf for company.

The wolf, however, trotted along beside her. "Not good-bye," he said, "for I have nothing to do just now, so I'll just go with you part of the way for the sake of the walk and the company."

Ellen said nothing, but quickened her steps, while the gander and the gray

wolf kept up with her, the one on one side, the other on the other.

Presently the wolf began again. "Now about those Queerbodies, it's curious I never heard of them, for I thought I knew everybody hereabouts: the dwarfs, and Little Red Riding Hood, and the three bears, and —" he hesitated for a moment, and then added with a gulp, "and the woodsmen; but no Queerbodies that I ever heard tell of."

"Who lives there?" asked Ellen, pointing to a little house she had just caught sight of in a dank and lonely glade. It had occurred to her that she might stop there for a glass of water and so rid herself of the wolf's company.

The wolf grinned, as though he guessed her thought. "Nobody lives there now. Queer looking house is n't it?"

Ellen thought it was indeed a queer looking house. "Why, what is it made of?" she asked.

"Bread and cake and barley sugar. But would n't you like to see it closer?

You might eat some of it, too, if you like, for no one ever visits it now except the wind and rain."

Ellen walked over toward the house, while the wolf stopped a moment to bite out a burr that had stuck between his toes. "I 'll be with you in a moment," he called after her.

"Mistress," said the gander stretching up its neck to whisper in Ellen's ear, "that old Gray-coat means no good to us."

"He frightens me," Ellen whispered back, "but what can I do?"

"He is n't looking now. Let 's slip inside the house and lock the door."

Ellen glanced back over her shoulder. The wolf was still busy over the burr, but it was some distance to the house. "Do you think we can get there before him?" she asked.

"We can but try."

"Come, then," and Ellen began to run toward the house; while the gander ran beside her, helping himself along with his wings.

At the noise they made, the wolf looked up, and then with a howl of rage came tearing after them with long swift bounds. By the time Ellen and the gander were on the threshold of the house he was at the foot of the steps, but, turning, the little girl slammed the door and shot the bolt into place.

With a howl of rage, the wolf flung himself against it so that it shook again, and Ellen and the gander trembled as they stood within; but the good door held, the bolt was true, and the wolf might do his worst; they were safe from him for the time at least.

Finding that he could do nothing, old Gray-coat sat down panting, his fierce eyes fixed upon the house. "Wait a bit," he muttered to himself. "You have escaped me this time, but I have as much time to spend as you, and how will it be when you have to come out again?"

Ellen, who heard this, looked at the gander. "What he says is true," she

whispered. "We are safe now, but we can't stay here; and how are we to get away without his catching us?"

"Let us think about that, perhaps we can contrive some way," the gander made answer.

He began to look about. The inside of the house was not built of cake and bread like the outside, but of wood, and the furniture was wooden also. At one end of the room was a great iron cage with a door and a padlock and key to fasten it. The cage was open at the top, but the bars were too high for any one but a monkey to climb out over them.

"I believe I know exactly what house this is," Ellen cried suddenly. "It's the house where Hänsel and Gretel came when they were lost in the forest; the house where the wicked witch lived. And this is the cage where she kept Hänsel. You know she put him in the cage and shut the door and fastened him in."

Stooping, she picked up some hard red

bits of shell from the floor. "Crabs' claws! Yes, now I know it's the same. Don't you know the story says, 'the best of food was cooked for poor Hänsel, but Gretel received nothing to eat but crabs' claws.'"

The gander walked into the cage and looked it over carefully. "Mistress, I believe I can get rid of the wolf," he said.

"How is that?"

"In this way," and the gander began to tell his scheme, while the little girl listened eagerly. "Yes, yes," she cried; "that might do. And I'm to hide in the cupboard while you open the door. Yes, and then to slip out and fasten the lock. Yes, I'll do it."

After they had their plan all arranged Ellen did as she said. She tiptoed across the floor and hid herself in the closet.

The gander waited until she was safely settled and all was quiet, and then he waddled over to the house door and peeped out through the keyhole. There

at the foot of the steps sat the wolf, his red tongue hanging out over his long white teeth, his fierce eyes fixed on the house.

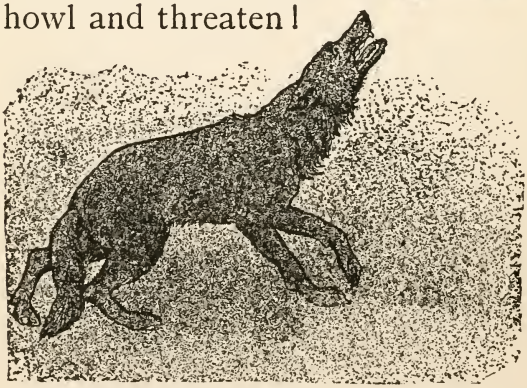
Suddenly with a rattle and noise the gander unbolted the door and flung it open. Like a flash the wolf bounded up and into the house. He gave a glance about him. Ellen was not to be seen, because she was hiding in the cupboard, but there was the plump white gander. It had flown away from the door as if in a great fright and into the cage. "Just where it is easy to catch you!" cried the wolf, as he bounded into the cage in pursuit of it, every tooth in his head showing.

The gander, however, was not to be so easily caught as the wolf had thought. In a moment it spread its wings and flew up over his head, while at the same time Ellen slipped out of the cupboard and shut the cage door, turning the key, tick-a-lock.

There was the wolf safely fastened

behind the iron bars, but the gander flew out over the top of the cage and alighted on the floor at Ellen's side. "Come, Mistress," he said, "the way is clear now, and we can journey on as soon as we choose."

How the wicked old wolf did howl and threaten!



But it was no good. Ellen and the gander let him make all the noise he chose, but they left him there. All they would do was to promise to send the first

woodsman they met in the woods to take charge of the cruel old Gray-coat.

They had scarcely travelled beyond sound of his howls when they met a huntsman with horn and gun journeying along under the trees. He greeted the two, and would have passed on, but Ellen stopped him.

"If you please," said she, "there's a wolf fastened in a cage in the little cake house back there. If you live near here would you mind taking care of him and seeing that he gets food and water?"

"A wolf!" cried the huntsman. "Who caught it?"

"This gander and I," and Ellen began telling the huntsman all about their meeting it, and what a narrow escape they had had.

The huntsman could not wonder enough. "I know that old wolf well enough," he said. "You have had a narrow escape, child. That is the same wolf that came so near to eating up Red Riding Hood." The man then

went on to say that he would get some of his fellows and they would bind the wolf and carry him to King Thrushbeard, who was making a collection of wild animals.

He begged the little girl to come with him as the king would be sure to give a large reward for such a large, fierce beast, but Ellen said she had no time. She must hasten on if she wished to reach the Queerbodies' house that day.

"Then at least accept this horn," and the huntsman unslung the one that he carried at his shoulder. "It is all I have to offer you, but it may serve to remind you of your adventure."

Ellen thought the horn very pretty, and was delighted. She thanked the huntsman, and then, bidding him goodby, she and her gander started forward once more upon their journey.

Chapter Seven

The Magic Lamp

"MISTRESS, I think we must be coming to the end of the forest," said the gander. "The trees are not so close together, and I seem to see a light beyond."

"I hope we are," answered the little girl.

"Once we are out from under the trees I can use my wings and then we 'll get along faster," the gander added.

Even sooner than he had thought, they came to the edge of the forest, where the open country began. It seemed very bright after the leafy shade where they had travelled so long.

Before them was the gentle slope of a hill, and away beyond it stood a castle

that shone like gold against the sky. "Oh see," cried Ellen, "a castle. Let's go nearer and look at it."

"Very well," answered the gander. "Seat yourself upon my back and we'll soon be there."

As the little girl was settling herself between his wings they heard a far-off sound of trumpets, and saw a number of people coming out of the castle. Even at that distance she could tell by the way the sunlight glittered on their clothing that they must be very magnificently dressed. There were horses, too, with nodding plumes. They all seemed to be forming in a procession, and then with another sound of trumpets they began to move away in an opposite direction.

"Oh hurry," cried Ellen, almost falling off the gander in her eagerness. "It must be a parade."

The gander spread his wings and flew as fast as he could, but when he reached the castle the procession had disappeared. No one was to be seen but two slaves

standing at the foot of the steps before the door. They were very magnificent, being dressed all in cloth of gold, and wearing about their necks collars of diamonds and rubies.

"Was that a parade that just went away?" asked Ellen, as the gander alighted softly upon the palace steps.

The slaves seemed struck with terror and amazement at her sudden appearance. They threw themselves down before her hiding their eyes. "Do not harm us," they cried. "We are only poor slaves."

"Why I'm not going to hurt you," said Ellen. "I could n't, anyway. I'm only a little girl."

"But surely you must be a magician to ride through the air in this way," and one of the slaves raised his head a little.

Ellen felt like laughing. "No, I'm not anything but a child, and this is Mother Goose's gander."

The slaves now rose from the ground

with a relieved look, "And you are really not a magician?"

"No, of course not. But what was all that we saw? We thought it was a parade."

"It was our master Aladdin with his slaves and guards riding away to pay a visit to his father-in-law, the sultan."

"*Aladdin!* Do you mean the Aladdin who has the wonderful lamp?"

"Even the same."

"Oh, I do wish I could see the lamp," and the child clasped her hands in her eagerness. "I never believed it was true before. Don't you think he would let me look at it?"

"He is away now, as we have just told you."

"But couldn't you let me see it? I've always wondered what it looked like, and thought what I'd wish for, if I had it."

The slaves looked at her suspiciously and began to whisper together. Then one of them turned to her again and

spoke. "I cannot promise," he said, "but if you will be pleased to follow me it may be that the soldiers will allow you to see the lamp."

The gander plucked at Ellen's sleeve. "Mistress, Mistress, do not follow him," he whispered. "I don't know why, but I fear danger."

Ellen, however, was too eager to heed what the gander said. It was too wonderful a chance to lose; the chance of really seeing — perhaps even handling — the lamp of Aladdin. So she drew her sleeve away, and as the slaves led the way she followed them into a great hallway all of gold, set with patterns of rubies and emeralds.

The hall was empty with no one in sight except themselves, though Ellen could hear a distant sound of music and singing from some other part of the castle.

Along the hall they went, and up a flight of golden steps. After this there was another hall and more stairs and

winding ways, until Ellen felt completely lost.

At last they came to a barred and bolted door before which stood two soldiers with drawn swords in their hands. As they saw Ellen and the gander coming up the hall they crossed their swords before the door. "Who are these whom you have dared to bring hither?" they cried to the slaves.

The slaves made a deep reverence. "If you please," answered one of them, "it is one who says she is a child, and who comes begging to see the lamp of Aladdin."

Ellen began to feel somewhat timid, the soldiers looked at her so frowningly and suspiciously. "If you don't mind," she began, "I thought I would like to see it, but if it's too much trouble, of course it does n't matter."

The foremost slave advanced with great respect and began whispering to the soldiers. They frowned more and more heavily as they listened. At last

as the slave finished whispering they lowered their swords. "Very well," said one of them to Ellen, "you shall see the lamp." He made a motion and the slaves sprang forward and unbolted and unbarred the door.

At a gesture from the soldier Ellen stepped inside. On the instant, and before the gander had time to follow her in, the door was shut behind her with a crash, and she heard the bolts and bars falling into place.

With a sudden fear she turned and tried to open the door. It was fast. They had made her a prisoner. "Let me out! Let me out!" she called, but there was no answer. "It 's nothing but a fairy tale," whispered the child to herself. "Nothing but a fairy tale, so of course they can't hurt me, but I wish my gander was in here, too. I wonder why they shut the door, anyway. They said I might come in." Then a sudden suspicion struck her. "I wonder if they thought I had come here to steal the

lamp?" Breathing rather fast, she turned and looked about her. The room where she stood was very large and high. Like the halls it was made entirely of gold, and the walls were polished until it seemed as though they must be too slippery for even a fly to crawl upon them. There was no door except the one by which she had come in, and though there were two windows they were very narrow, and set so high in the wall that it would have needed a long ladder to climb up to them. Ellen walked all around the room. There seemed no possible way of getting out.

Half way up one of the walls and far out of reach was a little shelf set with rubies and diamonds and other precious stones, and upon this shelf stood a battered, rusty old lamp. As Ellen's eyes fell upon it she felt sure it must be the magic lamp.

Suddenly she was startled by something coming against the opening of one of the windows and darkening it. There

was a sound of brushing and rustling, and her gander flew down beside her. "Here I am, Mistress," he said.

"Oh dear, Gander," cried Ellen, "I 'm so glad you 've come! Why did they shut the door?"

"Well, from the talk I heard around me, they were afraid you wanted to steal that lamp up there on the shelf and run away with it, and that 's why they locked you in here. I don't see why any one should want to steal that lamp though. Why it 's not even gold, — nothing but copper."

"No, but then I think it must be Aladdin's magic lamp," Ellen explained.

She found that the gander had never even heard of the lamp and the genie, so she told him all about it. She told him of its being a magic lamp, and of how, if any one rubbed it a great genie would appear who would do whatever he was told to do by the one who held the lamp.

"Well!" said the gander, drawing a

long breath as she finished. "No wonder they thought you wanted to steal it, if it's like that. Why it's as good as a wishing stone."

"But of course I did n't want to take it," cried Ellen indignantly. "Why did n't they ask me, and I 'd have told them I did n't."

"Well, the great thing now is how are you to get out?" said the gander.

"Why don't you take me up on your wings and fly out of the window?"

The gander looked up doubtfully at the narrow slit where he had just come in. "I 'm afraid I can't. That window was a tight fit even for me, and I never could get you through."

"Then what *am* I to do?"

The gander thought for awhile. "Did you say that if you held that lamp and rubbed it a genie would come?"

"Yes, I suppose he would."

"And he would do whatever you bade him?"

"Yes."

"Then the thing for you to do is to rub the lamp and when the genie comes to tell him to set you free."

Ellen felt frightened at the idea of calling up a great black genie. "But I could n't reach the lamp away up there, even if I wanted to," she said.

"No trouble about that," and the gander spread his wings, "I can help you there." So saying, he flew up to where the shelf was. As he reached it he struck at the lamp with his wing, but he missed it; again he tried, and this time he just grazed it with his feathers; a third time and then he struck it fairly and the lamp fell clattering and rattling and rolled across the golden floor to Ellen's feet.

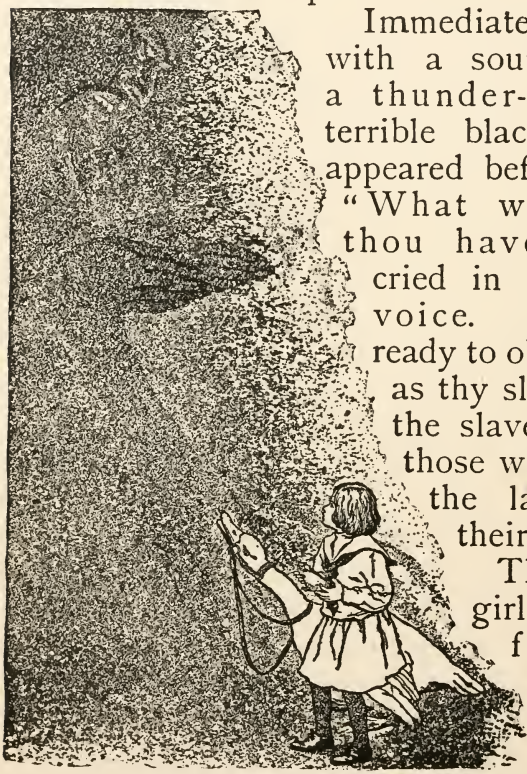
Trembling, the little girl picked it up.

"Rub it; rub it, Mistress," said the gander. "I hear the soldiers coming."

But Ellen hesitated. "I 'm afraid," she cried.

"Quick," and the gander flapped his wings in his excitement. "If they catch you again you may never get away."

Then Ellen brushed her thumb across the side of the lamp.



Immediately, and with a sound like a thunder-clap a terrible black genie appeared before her. "What wouldst thou have?" he cried in a great voice. "I am ready to obey thee as thy slave and the slave of all those who have the lamp in their hands." The little girl was so frightened at the sight of this terrible being she had called up that she stood there unable to move.

"Speak, Mistress!" cried the gander, "for here come the soldiers."

And indeed at that moment the door was thrown open and the soldiers burst into the room. They had heard the noise of the genie's coming and were afraid Ellen was getting away. But as they saw a terrible black being crouching there before the little girl, they shrank back in terror. The next instant, however, one of the boldest of them sprang forward to tear the lamp from Ellen's hands.

At that she found her voice. "I wish," she cried, "to be in a place of safety with my gander."

Immediately, before she could catch her breath, she found herself being whisked through the air by the genie. Then before she could catch her breath she was set gently upon the ground.

When she could look about her she saw that she and the gander were standing on a grassy plain some distance from the castle. She still held the lamp

in her hands, and the genie was still with her.

"Hast thou any further commands?" asked he, in his terrible voice.

"No," answered Ellen, trembling violently.

"Then I will go," said the genie, and he began to fade away.

"Oh, wait a minute," the child called after him. "What shall I do with the lamp?"

"Wouldst thou not wish to keep it?"

"Why no, it is n't mine."

"Shall I return it to the castle?"

"Oh no, Mistress," the gander interrupted, "they might rub it and tell the genie to bring us back and keep us prisoners."

"Then destroy it," the genie suggested.

"But what would become of Aladdin and his castle and everything if I did?"

"They would stay as they are. And moreover if the lamp were destroyed he would no longer be tormented with fears

lest an enemy should steal it and send me to destroy all he has."

"Very well," said Ellen, "I'll do it. But I can't break the lamp. How *can* I destroy it?"

"I will cause the earth to open,—to open down to the great fires below. Then throw the lamp in and the flames will destroy it."

"Very well," said the little girl.

The genie struck his foot upon the ground and muttered some magic words. Immediately the ground was rent open, and down in this chasm could be heard the roaring of the under fires. "Make haste," he cried. "Cast the lamp into the flames or they will devour thee."

Hardly knowing what she did Ellen threw the lamp from her down into the fiery chasm.

Immediately there was a loud roaring like thunder. The earth and sky seemed to shake and the castle to tremble from its foundation to its highest turret. A mist came before Ellen's eyes. When

it cleared away all was still. The chasm had closed and the distant castle was still in its place.

The gander, which had crouched down in its terror with its head and neck stretched along the ground, arose slowly and looked about it.

The genie had become as thin as smoke, but he was standing there dark and gigantic as before. "I am free! I am free!" he cried in a joyful voice. "At last I may come and go as I choose, no longer a slave of the lamp. It is you, child, who have freed me, and I am not ungrateful, as you shall soon see. If I have made Aladdin rich and powerful, I will make you ten times more so. You shall have a castle even more magnificent than his with slaves and treasures and horses and chariots."

Ellen gasped. "Oh no," she said, "I don't think I want all that. I have to go home pretty soon, and I don't believe I'd like to have to live in a castle."

"But you could still go home," said the genie. "You could go home in such magnificence as you never dreamed of, with outriders and trumpeters and dressed in cloth of gold and precious stones."

But the thought of such magnificence frightened Ellen. "No, no," she repeated. "I'm afraid my mother would n't like it."

The genie looked disappointed. "Well," he said, "Of course, it's just as you like." He was still fading away and growing more mistlike.

"I wish," Ellen exclaimed, "that Aladdin knew what had become of the lamp."

"Thy wish shall be granted," answered the genie. "I will myself tell him that it has been destroyed. And now farewell, and remember if thou shouldst ever wish to have that castle thou needst only clap thy hands three times and call upon the genie of the lamp to fulfil his promise and it shall be thine."

The genie had grown so transparent now that it was only by straining her eyes that Ellen could still see his shape as one sees an empty glass. Then he was gone entirely. "Thank you very much," she called after him. She waited a moment and as there was no answer she called again, "Thank you!" Then she turned to the gander. "I think he's gone," she said, adding in a whisper, "and I'm glad he has, because he *did* frighten me a little, he was so very big and black."

The gander made no answer except to ask Ellen if she were ready to go. He seemed anxious for them to be on their way once more, so the little girl mounted on his back and they were soon flying swiftly along.

"I hope," said Ellen after a silence, "that Aladdin won't mind about the lamp being burned up."

"I should think he would be glad," replied the gander. "He must have been terribly afraid all the time that

enemies would get it and make the genie destroy him and his castle."

"Yes, that is true," said Ellen; then she added after another silence, "And how glad that poor genie was that I had set him free at last."

Chapter Eight

Bluebeard's House

"MISTRESS, do you see that gray mist before us?" said the gander. "I think we have reached the border of the Fairy Tale Country, and beyond that mist lies the country of the Queerbodies."

Ellen drew rein, and the gander allowed himself to sink slowly to the ground. There he folded and settled his wings, and he and his mistress stood looking at the wall of mist before them. It was like the mist that hangs over streams in the early morning. They could not tell at all how high it was. Sometimes it looked quite low, and sometimes it seemed to reach up to the

sky itself so that they could not tell where one ended and the other began.

"Look," cried Ellen in a whisper. "Do you suppose that is one of the Queerbodies?"

A gigantic shadow had appeared upon the wall of mist. It moved with such tremendous strides that it was out of sight in a moment. And now they saw other shadows. Some seemed to be bending over and taking up handfuls of earth and examining them as if in search of something. Others seemed to reach up as if after invisible fruit. Some were talking and nodding together, and every now and then one would turn and hurry away, as if suddenly remembering some business.

They were not all as big as the first shadow, though some of them stretched up so high that their heads and shoulders were lost in the grayness of the sky.

"They must be the Queerbodies," said the gander in a low tone, "for I'm sure they're not fairy tales."

"But they look so big, — like giants. Do you think they'll hurt us? Just suppose they were wicked giants who ate children like so many radishes." Ellen had read some place in a fairy story of giants who did that.

"Maybe we'd better stop and ask some place," suggested the gander. "If they ate children I'm sure they'd eat ganders too, for some people who don't eat children at all eat ganders."

Then Ellen looked about and saw that not far away stood a very large, fine house. It was not by any means as magnificent as Aladdin's, but still it was very handsome.

"Let us ask at that house," said Ellen. "They live so close to the mist that I'm sure they must know what goes on beyond, even if they have never been there."

The gander was more than willing for this; so he took Ellen up and flew with her to the house. There she alighted and mounted the steps, but the door was so very grand and tall that she could not

reach the knocker, and had to knock with her knuckles.

There was a moment's silence, and then a voice within called, "Sister Anne, Sister Anne, did you hear anything?"

Another voice answered, "I heard the brushing of the vine leaves against the lattice, but I heard nothing else."

"Your knuckles are too soft, Mistress," said the gander; "let me knock," and with his bill he struck against the door.

Again the same voice within called, "Sister Anne, Sister Anne, do you hear nothing now?" And the second voice answered, "I hear a woodpecker tapping upon a branch outside, but that is all."

"Mistress, it is no use," said the gander, "you will have to climb upon my back so as to reach the knocker, or they will never hear us."

So Ellen climbed upon the gander's back and then she found she could just reach the knocker. Rap, rap, rap! she struck upon the door.

"Sister Anne, Sister Anne, do you still hear nothing?" cried the first voice.

"Yes, now I hear some one knocking upon the door."

In a moment the door opened and a lady stood in the doorway gazing with wonder at the child and the gander.

"What is it, Sister? Who is there?" called the first voice impatiently.

"It's a child," answered the lady in the doorway. "A real child it looks like."

Almost instantly another lady came hurrying down the hall and joined the one at the door. She was more beautiful than the

first, but her face had a scared look as though she had once had such a fright that she had never gotten over it.

"Why, yes, it is a real child," she cried. "You are a real child, aren't you? Where did you come from, and where are you going? Is that your gander? What are you going to do with it?"

There were so many questions that Ellen hardly knew which to answer first, but she began, "I came through the nursery wall, and I'm trying to find the Queerbodies' house, and this is Mother Goose's gander. She just lent it to me for awhile."

"Going to the Queerbodies' house!" The beautiful lady glanced at her sister. Then she took Ellen by the hand and drew her gently in. "Come in and tell me all about it."

"I think I must hurry on," said Ellen. "It's been a longer journey than I thought;" but she allowed herself to be drawn in.

The room where the strange ladies took her was very magnificently furnished, and there the beautiful one whose name was Fatima made her sit in a big armed chair. She offered another chair to the gander and he seated himself in it as gravely as possible, resting his wings on the arms. "And now," cried Fatima eagerly, "tell me all about it."

So Ellen began and told her about her journey, while Fatima listened with her chin in her hand, and her eyes never leaving the child's face. Sister Anne listened too. "But now," Ellen ended, "I feel afraid to go any further, for it looks as though there were giants beyond that mist. Do you know whether they're cross giants or not?"

Fatima started up and clasped her hands. "Oh if I only knew what they *are* like," she cried. "I watch from my window and long so to know what they are doing and how they look that some-

times it seems as if I could not bear it. Some day I know I shall go through the mist just to find out."

"Fatima! Fatima!" cried Sister Anne warningly. Then she added, turning to Ellen, "She's so curious. She always has been so, and that's what all her troubles came from."

"Oh yes," murmured Fatima, dropping back in her chair. "I suppose you know my story? I suppose you've heard of Bluebeard, haven't you?" and leaning forward again she looked eagerly at Ellen.

"Oh yes, I have all about him in a book at home. It has colored pictures, and there's a picture of Fatima with her hair all down, and one of Sister Anne up on the tower and the brothers coming in, and ever so many more."

"Oh yes, I shall never forget that time when my brothers came rushing in. And then that day when I looked in the room and saw all the heads in a row and dropped the key —"

Fatima shuddered, and hid her face in her hands.

"Are you really that Fatima?" asked Ellen. She was afraid it was hardly polite to ask, but she did want so much to know.

"Yes, she is," Sister Anne answered for her, for Fatima seemed unable to speak. "And I often remind her of all the troubles her curiosity brought on her that time. A little more and her head would have been chopped off; but she does n't seem to have learned anything. She 'd go off to the Queerbodies' country now if I 'd let her, just so as to see what they 're like. Then the first thing she knew they 'd be making her into another story, and she 'd never get back."

"Yes, I *do* want to know," cried Fatima. She leaned forward, and caught Ellen by the wrist so suddenly that it startled her. "Could n't *you* come back and tell me all about it," she cried.

"Why I — I don't know whether I

come back this way; I hoped there was a shorter way home," and Ellen's lip trembled, for she was getting a little tired of her long journeyings in spite of her wish to find the lost story.

"Then your gander; maybe he could come back."

"Oh yes," answered the gander, "I'll have to come back this way. But the thing is, do we want to go any further. I didn't like the looks of those giants myself."

"Oh yes," urged Fatima. "I wouldn't be afraid. Maybe it's only their shadows that are so big. And then I tell you what; I'll give you something that may help you along. Look!" With fingers that trembled with eagerness she drew a key-ring from her pocket and slipped from it a key. The key seemed to be of pure gold, but upon one side of it was a rusty spot. Ellen wondered whether it was the key that had unlocked the door of the forbidden chamber.

"Take this," said Fatima. "It is a magic key, and there is never a lock it will not fit nor a catch it will not undo."

Ellen was slow about taking it. She glanced at the gander. "I don't believe I want to go back, but I don't know."

The gander answered her look. "We'll go on then," he said, "and if we have that key they can't keep us locked up, and my wings will be always good to carry us out of trouble."

"And you'll bring me back word?" cried Fatima.

"Yes, I will," the gander promised.

And now Fatima was eager for them to go. It seemed as though she could not wait to have her curiosity satisfied. Sister Anne would have had them stay and rest awhile and have some refreshment after their long journey, but Fatima could not hide her impatience to have them start. And indeed Ellen and the gander were in as much haste as she.

Fatima went with them to the very edge of the wall of mist and the last

thing they heard as they plunged into it was her voice calling after them, "Don't forget, you are to bring me word, and make haste; make haste."

Chapter Nine

Beyond the Mist

"OH how cold and still and gray," cried Ellen. They were in the very heart of the mist. She could hear the steady beat of the gander's wings, but the grayness around was so thick that she could see nothing but the dim outline of his neck before her. She would not have known whether they were moving at all if it had not been for the stir of air against her face.

"Mistress, do you see light before us?" asked the gander.

"No, nothing but the grayness."

"One might travel around and around in this mist, and yet never find one's way out," said the gander half to itself.

On and on it flew. "Is there no light before us yet?" it asked again, and its wings seemed to flag.

"No, there is nothing."

"Can you hear any sound?"

Ellen listened. "Nothing but the beating of your wings."

"Mistress, I no longer know whether I am flying forward or not. For all I can tell I may be going around in a circle."

The child looked helplessly about her.

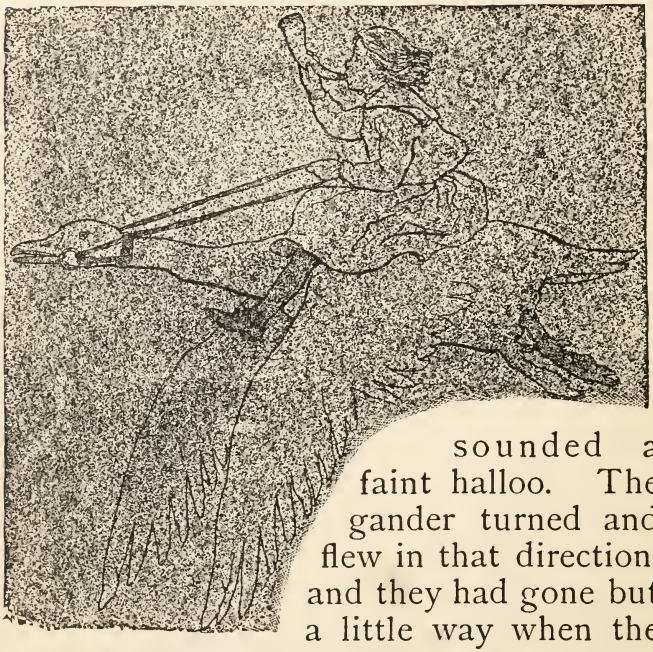
"I wonder if I were to blow upon the horn the huntsman gave me whether some one would hear and answer?" she suggested.

"You might try it."

Ellen raised the horn to her lips and blew. They both listened, but there was no reply.

Again she blew. Still silence.

The third time she drew a deep breath and blew with all her might. The gander stayed his flight to listen, and now, away toward the right hand, there



sounded a faint halloo. The gander turned and flew in that direction, and they had gone but a little way when the grayness before them grew lighter. Another moment or so, and they were through the mists and out upon the other side.

But Ellen looked about her in dismay. They were in the midst of a great barren desert. There was no tree nor house in

sight, no bird nor living thing.

Yes, there was one thing alive, for just as Ellen thought this, something stirred and stood up from a heap of rocks near by. It was a lad of about twelve or thirteen. At first Ellen thought it was the son of the gardener they had at home; it certainly looked like him. The little girl was very fond of this lad, though people used to say he was queer and not quite right in his mind. He often made up stories and told them to her. She never had felt as glad to see him, though, as she felt then. When she went closer, however, the lad did not seem to know her, so she wondered whether it was the gardener's son after all. It certainly looked like him.

"Was that you blowing a horn?" asked the lad.

"Yes; we were lost in the mist and wanted to get out, but we wanted to get out on the side where the Queerbodies live."

"Well, this is it."

Ellen looked about her. "But where are they? I saw their shadows on the mist."

The lad laughed. "Oh that's nothing. Why, I used to see their shadows against the sky even when I was at home, but you'll have to travel far from here before you find them. I suppose you have a compass."

"No. What for?"

"To find your way across the desert. Now I have a compass all right, but I'm so tired I can't go a step further." The lad paused and looked at the gander. "I don't suppose your gander could carry double?"

"No, I could n't," answered the gander.

"Well, I did n't think you could, but it's too bad, for I could have told you how to go. If I only had brought anything to begin with I'd make something to ride on; but I did n't know the journey would be so long and weary."

"Do you mean," said Ellen, "that if you had anything to begin with you

could *really* make something to ride on?"

"Oh yes. Almost everybody, before they start out for the Queerbodies', learns to make something out of nothing; but I was in such a hurry to start I only learned to make much out of little, and that 's the trouble now."

"Have n't you anything in your pocket to begin on?" asked Ellen, for the lad's pockets were bulging with something that jingled every time he moved.

"Nothing that would do. It must be something that was once alive. Now you don't happen to have such a thing about you as a twig or a chip of wood?"

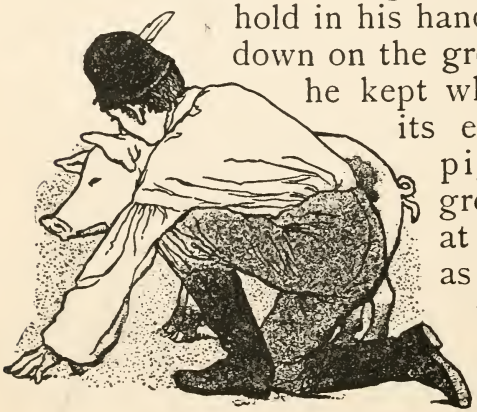
"No. That is, nothing but a little wooden pig, and it was never alive."

"No, but the wood was when it was growing. Will you let me see it?"

As Ellen drew the toy from her pocket the boy took it from her eagerly. His eyes sparkled. "The very thing!" he cried. "I can make a magnificent riding-horse out of this." Holding the pig to his mouth, the boy began to whisper

magic in its wooden ear. As he did so the pig began to grow. It grew and it grew, while Ellen stared in wonder.

When it was too large for the boy to hold in his hands he set it down on the ground. Still he kept whispering in its ear and the pig kept on growing, until at last it was as large as a pony.



When it was that big the lad stopped. "There!" he said to Ellen, looking at the pig with pride, "how is that for a riding-horse?"

"I think it's fine, but I should n't call it a riding-*horse;* I think it's more of a riding-*pig*."

"All the same," said the lad. "Now the next thing is a bridle. When a magic pig like this once does start going

it won't stop for a word. I suppose you have n't anything about you that would serve for a bridle."

"Nothing but this," and Ellen touched the golden chain that the dwarfs had hung about her neck.

"That will do," cried the boy; "give it here." He seemed to feel so sure that Ellen would lend him the chain that she did not know how to say no, so she took it off and handed it to him.

The lad quickly arranged it as a bridle, and then before he mounted the pig he took out his compass and made sure of the direction in which they were to go.

"And now I 'm ready," he cried; "follow me."

With that he leaped on the pig's back, and no sooner had he touched it than away it went like the wind. Its blue legs with the pink spots twinkled along so fast that it took all the gander knew to keep up with them.

On and on they went; the wind whistled past Ellen's ears, and the ground

sped away beneath so fast that she grew almost dizzy.

The lad, however, did not seem to mind how fast they went. Now and then he settled himself more comfortably on the pig's back, and now and then he took out his compass and looked at it to make sure they were going in the right direction.

After they had gone a long distance in this way he drew rein. "There!" he said, "the desert is passed; but there is a greater danger than it to come."

"What is that?"

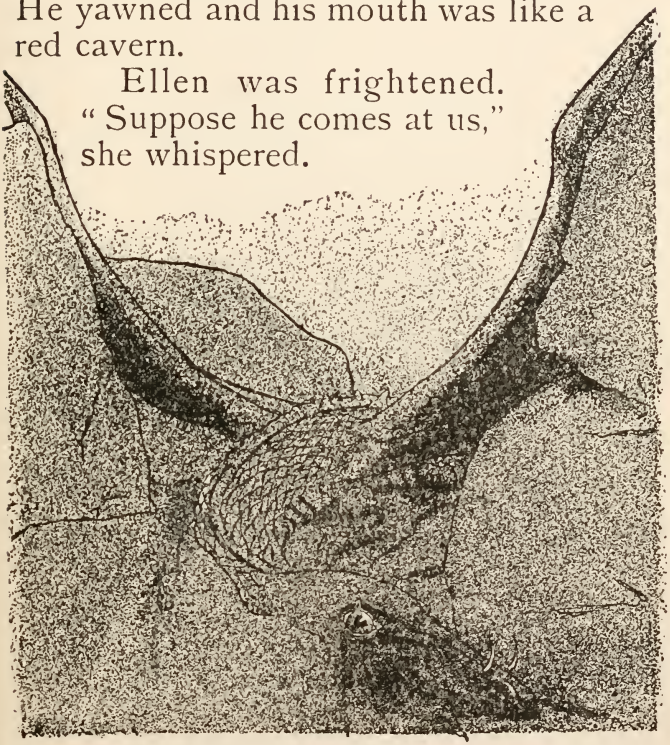
"Look!" And the lad pointed.

Ellen looked, and then she saw that what she had thought was a stretch of grass and rocks before them, was really an enormous green and gray dragon that lay stretched in a rocky defile.

His neck and tail were coiled upon the ground; his wings stretched up the rocky walls on each side of him, and their tips were like tall green trees against the sky. Presently he turned

his head and Ellen could see his big blinking eyes, each as big as a barrel. He yawned and his mouth was like a red cavern.

Ellen was frightened. "Suppose he comes at us," she whispered.



"Oh no, he won't pay any attention to us," the lad assured her. "That is,

unless we try to go past him, and then he'd snap us up in a twinkling."

"Could n't we go round?"

"No, this is the only way, right between these rocks."

"I could fly over," said the gander boldly.

The lad laughed. "Fly over! Why look at his wings. He'd catch you in a minute. Have you ever seen a bird after a little butterfly? That's the way he'd catch you if you tried any such tricks as that."

"Then what *are* we to do?" asked Ellen.

"Wait," answered the lad. "They'll come to feed him after a while; maybe in a week or so; and after he's been fed he always sleeps for ten minutes; then we can safely go past, for nothing will waken him for those ten minutes. You might hit him on the head with an axe and he would n't stir."

"A week or so!" cried Ellen in dismay. "Why I can't wait a week or so.

I have to be home this evening before dark."

"Well, I don't see what we can do unless you have something to feed him with."

"I have a golden egg. That's all."

"A golden egg!" cried the lad joyfully. "Why didn't you say so before? Why, it's just the thing. Give it to me."

He took the egg from Ellen and slowly rode over toward the dragon. The great creature watched him with its blinking eyes, and when the lad seemed to be coming too near it raised its head and hissed warningly. Ellen trembled, the sound was so loud and terrible, as though a dozen engines were letting off steam all at once.

The lad, however, did not seem at all frightened. He checked the pig and motioned to the dragon to open its mouth. Ellen had seen people motion to the elephant at the Zoo in that same way when they wanted it to lift up its

trunk, and open its mouth to have peanuts thrown in.

The dragon seemed to understand, for after the boy had motioned once or twice it opened its great jaws. Then the lad threw the golden egg in, and it seemed just as small a thing for the dragon as a peanut or a currant would to an elephant.

The dragon waited a while with its mouth still open for the boy to throw some more in. As he did not do this, however, it closed its mouth and began to chew the golden egg.

It chewed, and it chewed, and it chewed, and all the while it chewed it seemed to be growing sleepier and sleepier. At last it swallowed the egg, and then its eyes shut tight and it went fast asleep.

The boy turned and beckoned to Ellen. "Come on," he shouted at the top of his lungs.

"Oh don't talk so loud," Ellen whispered, coming up to him as fast as she could. "You might waken him."

The lad burst into a shout of laughter that made the little girl tremble. "Not I," he cried. "He 'll sleep for nine minutes yet. One minute has gone already."

"Then let 's hurry."

The gander flew up and on, and the boy was not slow to follow, riding his blue and pink pig right over the dragon. Ellen was in terror lest it should waken in spite of what the boy had said, but he did not seem in the least afraid. He even seemed to take pleasure in making the pig trot the full length of the dragon's tail just as children take pleasure in walking along a railroad track.

At last they were safely over, and Ellen drew a sigh of relief.

On and on they went, and instead of the rocky walls on either side of them growing lower they grew higher and higher, arching over more and more until at last they met and made a sort of gallery. There was very little light here, and when at last the pig stopped and the gander settled to the ground

Ellen had to look twice before she saw that they were in front of a heavily barred door. "Where are we now?" she asked.

The eyes of the boy were flashing with eagerness. "It is the door of the Queerbodies' house," he cried. He sprang from the pig, and, taking hold of the handle, he tried to open it. "Locked!" he added.

Slipping his hand into his pocket he drew from it a whole handful of keys. Then Ellen knew that they were what had jingled every time he moved.

He began to try one key after another, but none of them seemed to fit.

As he was busy in this way a curious roar sounded through the gallery, echoing and re-echoing from the rocky walls. "What 's that?" cried Ellen.

"Oh, only the dragon yawning. He must have wakened up," answered the lad coolly, still busy with his keys.

"But won't he follow us?"

"No; he only guards the entrance to the defile."

Finding that none of the keys he first held would open the lock the lad had drawn out another handful; but these were no better than the others. One after another he tried all that he had, but not any would unlock the door. Having tried the last of all, the boy threw it down and sank upon the floor in despair.

"It is no good," he cried. "It is just as I feared. And yet I 've been collecting those keys for the last seven months."

"Can't you unlock it?"

"No."

"Then what are you going to do?"

"I don't know. I did n't mind the desert or the dragon, but this was what I was afraid of all along."

"Mistress," said the gander, "Where is the key that the lady Fatima gave you? If what she said was true, it should unlock the door."

"Oh yes!" cried Ellen. "I forgot it."

With eager fingers she took the key from her pocket and pressed it into the lad's hand. "Try this," she said.

Very hopelessly the boy arose and put the key to the lock. His face changed as he found it seemed to go in it easily. He turned the key, the lock slipped back, the door opened, and Ellen, following close at his heels, entered at last the House of the Queerbodies.

Chapter Ten

In the House of the Queerbodies

ELLEN and her companions were standing in a circular golden hall. All around the hall were arched doorways, and overhead, supported by golden pillars, was a blue dome studded with jewels that shone like stars. There were no windows to be seen, but all the hall was filled with a clear and pleasant light that seemed to come from the dome.

As Ellen looked wonderingly about, she heard a tapping sound behind her, and turning saw a tall man oddly dressed in green and yellow, and holding in his hand an ivory rod tipped with gold. It was this rod that she had heard as it tapped on the floor.

The man stood looking at her and her friends in silence for a few moments. Then he said, "Now how did you all

get in here I should like to know; I have not opened the door to any one this morning."

"I had a key," answered Ellen, "and it fitted the door, so this lad unlocked it. We did n't know there was any one here to open it for us."

"Yes, I am the keeper of the gate, but I don't open for every one that knocks. But how did you find your way to the door, in the first place?"

"I came on this gander; it 's Mother Goose's gander, you know."

"Oh, then, that is all right. But how about this lad? Did he come on the gander too?"

"No, I came on the pig," answered the boy, speaking for himself.

"I don't know that pig. Where did you get it?"

The lad told him. The gate-keeper shook his head. "It is n't really your pig, you know. You ought to have made it out of nothing. But did you come across the desert?"

"Yes."

"And you passed the dragon?"

"Yes."

"And unlocked the door! Well, I suppose it's all right. And what do you want to set about, now that you are here?"

"I should like to try my hand at fitting a puzzle together," answered the lad boldly.

Ellen stared. She had never heard anything so curious; for the lad to have come all that way and through all those dangers, and then want to play with a puzzle the first thing.

The gate-keeper, however, did not seem at all surprised. He walked over to one of the golden pillars and took a key from the bunch at his side. And now Ellen noticed that in each of the pillars was a narrow door. The gate-keeper unlocked the one in front of which he stood, and when he opened it the little girl could see that the pillar was hollow and fitted with shelves just

like a closet. From a shelf the man took a box of puzzle blocks and put it in the lad's hand.

"That's your room in there," he said, pointing to one of the arched doorways.

The lad took the puzzle, and hastened away with such eager joy that he seemed to have quite forgotten Ellen and everything, even the magic pig that followed close at his heels.

The little girl looked after him. "I should think if he just wanted a puzzle he could have gotten one at home," she said.

"Not such puzzles as these," answered the man. "Did you ever see a Queerbodies' puzzle when it was finished?"

"I don't think I did."

"Then come here, and I'll show you some."

The man led Ellen over to a large case and opening the lid he bade her look in. There, all placed in rows, were countless boxes of puzzles,—puzzles that were finished. As Ellen looked she

gave a little cry of astonishment and delight. The pictures she saw were just such as one might see upon any puzzle blocks, — pictures of children swinging in a garden, of a farm-yard scene, or a child's birthday party. The difference was that all of these were alive. The swing really swung up and down; the trees and flowers stirred their leaves; the tiny cows switched their tails to scare away flies too small for Ellen to see, and a cock upon the fence swelled his neck and crowed. The children at the party looked at the gifts and then began to play. Ellen even fancied that she could hear their voices very tiny and clear as they laughed and talked together.

"Do you have puzzles like that at home?" asked the keeper of the gate.

"Oh no," cried Ellen. She drew a long breath as the man closed the case. "Can everybody that comes here make puzzles like those?"

"No, indeed. Sometimes even when they get the puzzles finished they don't

come alive, and then they're good for nothing but to be thrown away. Do you see all these doorways?"

"Yes."

"Well, there are people in all those rooms, and in every room they're doing something different."

"What are some of the things they do?"

"Over there," and the man pointed to one of the doorways, "they're making garments out of thin air; in the room next to that they're stringing stars."

"Stringing stars?"

"Yes. They fish for them with nets from the windows and then string them for crowns and necklaces. It's very pretty to see. Then there's a whole room where they do nothing but make forgotten stories over into new ones."

"Oh! Oh!" cried Ellen, clasping her hands. "That's what I came for. I came to look for a forgotten story. *Do* you suppose it's there?"

"Why, I don't know. I should n't

wonder. But do you want to make it over?"

"No, I want to find it the way it is. My grandmamma used to know it, but she's forgotten it now, so I want to find it, so as to tell her about it."

"Well, I don't know," said the man doubtfully. "We might go and ask about it. I don't know very much about the different rooms myself, but come and we'll see."

The room of the forgotten stories, to which the gate-keeper now led Ellen was very large. So large that when the little girl stood in the doorway and looked about her she could hardly see where it ended. Upon the floor in rows stood countless golden jars. Among these rows figures were moving about or pausing at different jars to take something from them. They all seemed very busy, though Ellen could not make out what they were doing at first.

Quite near the door a girl or a woman was standing; Ellen could not tell which

she was. She looked like a woman, but her hair hung down her back in a heavy plait. She wore some sort of loose brown garments. Her hands were clasped before her and she seemed to be thinking deeply; so deeply that she did not notice the gate-keeper nor Ellen nor the gander as they stood looking at her.

Suddenly she began to smile to herself, and, bending over one of the jars, she thrust her hand into it and brought it forth filled with some substance like wet clay, only much more beautiful than clay, for it glistened and shone between her fingers with all the colors of the rainbow. This she began to pat and mould into shape as she held it, humming softly to herself meanwhile as if from sheer happiness.

The gate-keeper waited a few minutes to see whether she would notice him, and then he tapped upon the floor with his ivory staff. The Queerbody looked around at the sound.

"Excuse me," said the man, "but here 's a little girl who has just come, and she says she 's come to look for a forgotten story; can you tell her anything about it?"

The Queerbody gazed earnestly at Ellen. "A forgotten story!" she repeated slowly. "This is the place to come for forgotten stories, but it may be that it has been made into something else. How long is it since it was forgotten, — this story that you want?"

Ellen told her a long time; ever since her grandmother was a little girl.

The Queerbody shook her head. "I 'm afraid it may have been made over," she said; "but there 's no telling. There are some stories that have been here for many, many years; this one I was just beginning to use, for instance," and she held out her hands full of the shimmering stuff for Ellen to see.

"Why, is that a forgotten story?" asked Ellen. "I did n't know stories ever looked like that."

"This is only part of a story. When a story has been forgotten it is all divided up and put into different jars. Wondercluff we call it then. When we make a new story we take a handful from this and a handful from that, and when it 's done you 'd never know it was just old things pieced together. But what did your forgotten story look like? Can you tell me anything about it?"

Ellen could not tell her very much. "It was about a little princess called Goldenhair, and she had a wicked stepmother. The stepmother made her wear a sooty hood, but the fairies helped the princess. Then one time Goldenhair was combing her hair in the scullery and the stepmother came in and made her cut all her hair off; and I don't know the rest."

The Queerbody began to laugh. She held out the handful of wondercluff toward Ellen. "Why this is a part of that very story," she cried, "and you

came just in time. A little later and it would have been made into something else. Wait a bit. See if I can't put it together."

She reached down into other jars, and took out handful after handful of different wondercluff. Heaping it on a marble table she began to pat and mould it, working deftly with her slim long fingers. And as she worked, beneath her hands a figure began to grow.

Ellen watched, as if fascinated.

First the head with a golden crown. "It must have a crown because the story 's about a princess and royal folk," the Queerbody explained. Next appeared the body in a long flowing robe fastened by an embroidered girdle. Then beautiful white hands and arms. At last it was all done but the feet.

With her eyes fixed lovingly upon the figure she had made, the Queerbody reached down into a jar that she had not touched before. Suddenly her look changed. The smile faded from her

face and she turned her eyes on Ellen. "Oh, I forgot," she said in a low, sad voice. She drew her hand from the jar. There was nothing in it.

"What did you forget?" asked the little girl.

"I forgot the castle. I can't finish the story after all."

"But why not? She's all done but her feet. I should think you could easily do those."

"No, you see they have to be made of castle wondercluff. There was a castle in the story, and I haven't used any of that yet."

"What *do* you mean?"

"You see, when a story is broken to pieces all the parts of it are put in different jars, as I told you. All the king wondercluff in a jar, and birds in another jar, magic in another, witches in another, and so on. All the castles were put in this jar, and now I remember another Queerbody was making a story this morning and she used the last piece of

castle there was. Look for yourself. The jar is empty."

Ellen looked in the jar. There was nothing there. "Can't you use something else?"

"Of course not." The Queerbody spoke with some impatience. "Don't you remember the story begins with a castle where the princess lives?"

Suddenly, like a flash, Ellen remembered the genie and his promise. At the same moment the gander plucked at her sleeve. "Mistress, the castle you were promised," he whispered. There was no need of his reminding her.

"If I were to get a castle for you could you finish the story?" she asked the Queerbody hesitatingly.

"Yes, but where could you get a castle, you little girl?"

"I think I can get one." Ellen looked about. "We'd better go out in the hall," she whispered. She was afraid if she summoned the genie in there it would frighten the busy people around her.

She led the way back into the silent, empty hall while the gatekeeper and the Queerbody followed her wondering.

Ellen walked on until she stood under the centre of the dome. Then she stopped and looked at the others. "You need n't be afraid," she said, "he won't hurt you;" but she herself felt a little nervous at the idea of calling up the genie again. However, she drew a long breath, and then, clapping her hands three times, she summoned him to appear.

There was a loud noise as of thunder that made the gander cower behind Ellen, while the gatekeeper and the Queerbody trembled and turned pale. Immediately the genie appeared, more gigantic and terrible-looking than ever.

"Thou hast called me, and I am here at thy command," he said to Ellen. "Wilt thou now have the castle, the treasures, the slaves and horsemen that I promised thee?"

"Not the treasures and all that," answered Ellen, and her voice sounded

very little and soft after the genie's, "but I should like the castle now if I may have it?"

"It shall be thine. And where wilt thou have it?"

"I'd like it in a golden jar over in that room," said Ellen, pointing over to the forgotten story room.

"In a jar!" cried the genie in amaze, and he scowled as though he thought Ellen was making fun of him. But when she explained how it was, and why she wanted the castle, he burst into a roar of laughter that echoed and re-echoed against the blue dome. "I have heard of a genie in a bottle, but never of a castle in a jar," he cried. "However, it shall be thine. But hast thou no further wishes?"

"No, that's all," said Ellen.

"Then look in the jar and thou wilt find it there. Henceforth I appear to thee no more."

Immediately, and with another crash as of thunder, the genie was resolved into

air and disappeared. For a moment the hall seemed clouded with a thin gray vapor and then that too faded away and all was as it had been before.

Ellen and the others looked at each other while the gander craned its neck this way and that, as if to make sure that the genie had really gone.

The Queerbody was the first to speak. She drew a long breath. "I should n't like to see *him* again," she said. "But I wonder if he really put the castle there."

"I believe he did," said Ellen.

"Let us go and see." The Queerbody was all eagerness.

They hastened back to the room of the forgotten stories and bent over the castle jar. The Queerbody gave a cry of joy. It was half full of glistening wondercluff.

Reaching down into the jar she brought out great handfuls that shone and glistened. "*Now* I can finish the story," she cried.

She began patting and moulding with hands that trembled with eagerness and under her fingers the silvery feet of the fairy tale seemed almost to shape themselves. Then suddenly the figure stood complete, a tall and shining lady with a crown upon her head. The eyes, however, were blank and unseeing, and there was no breath to stir the silver robe.

"Take her hand," the Queerbody said to Ellen.

Timidly the little girl took the white hand of the Fairy Tale in hers. It was very cold, but as she held it, it seemed to grow warm and soft in her fingers.

"Speak to her," the Queerbody now commanded. At first Ellen could not think of what to say. Then, "Are you, — are you the forgotten Story I came to find?" she whispered.

Slowly the color flushed into the Fairy Tale's face; the life came into her eyes. Slowly very slowly she turned her head and looked down into Ellen's eager face. "Am I that Story?" she

murmured. "Look in my eyes and see."

She bent toward the child, and Ellen looked into her eyes. Such wonderful eyes they were. As she looked, Ellen seemed to lose herself in their clear depths. She lost all sense of where she was — even of the lady herself.

She never could tell afterward whether the lady spoke and told her the story, or whether she saw it mirrored in those eyes, or whether she was herself the little Princess Goldenhair living it all, but this was the fairy tale.

Chapter Eleven

The Princess Goldenhair

THERE were once a king and queen who had no children, though they greatly longed for them.

One day the queen was sitting at the window sewing, and the sunlight shone upon the golden thimble she wore, so that it fairly dazzled the eyes. "I wish," said the queen, "that I had a little daughter and that her hair was as golden as my thimble in the sun."

Soon after this a daughter was indeed born to the queen, and the hair upon her head was of pure gold, but in the hour that she was born the queen herself died.

As the little princess grew up, her hair was the wonder of all and because it was so beautiful she was always called the Princess Goldenhair or Goldilocks.

The king was prouder of his daughter's beauty than of all his treasures, and there was nothing he loved better than to see her unfasten her shining hair and shake it down about her, and then it was so long and bright that it covered her like a golden mantle.

But one day the king went hunting, and in the chase he rode so fast that at last he left all his followers behind.

He had reached a deep and lonely glade when suddenly his horse reared under him, and there, standing directly in his path was a beautiful woman dressed all in black. Her hair, too, was black as a raven's wing and her eyes were strangely bright. She stood looking at the king and she did not speak.

The king did not speak either, at first, for there was something in her look that

made him ill at ease, even while he wondered at her beauty.

"Who are you?" he said at last; but she made no answer. Then he questioned her whence she came, but she was still silent. But when he asked her if she would go back to the palace with him she nodded her head. So the king took her up before him and rode home with her.

After that the stranger lived at the palace. She spoke little and when she did her voice was hoarse and croaking, but she was very beautiful, and the king loved her and made her his queen.

There were great rejoicings over the marriage; but Goldenhair wept and wept; she feared the stepmother with her black hair and her bright round eyes.

Nevertheless at first the new queen was kind enough to the child. But then, little by little, she began to show the hatred she felt toward her. After a while it was nothing but hard words and harder looks. Above all, she could

not bear the sight of the princess's hair, but shuddered every time she saw it. After a while she had a dark hood made, and she obliged the princess to wear it, so that her hair might be hidden.

The child never dared to take off the hood by day, but every evening after the maids had left the scullery she would steal down there with a candle. It was very dark in the scullery, and the mice and beetles scuttled to and fro, but as Goldenhair opened the door she would say,

> "*Nimble mice that fear the light,*
> *Small, black beetles of the night,*
> *Shadows lurking here and there,*
> *I pray you fright not Goldenhair.*"

Then the mice and the beetles would noiselessly disappear in the cracks; the shadows would shrink into corners, and entering, Goldenhair would take off her hood, and shake down her hair to comb and brush its shining lengths. Then she would bind it up again and cover it

with her hood before she went up into the castle.

The stepmother knew nothing of this, but every day she grew bolder in her hate. She took from Goldenhair all the beautiful clothes and jewels that her father had had made for her and gave her instead things scarce better than those a kitchen wench might wear.

However the princess made no complaint, and the king her father did not even seem to notice it. It was as though the wicked queen had cast a spell over him so that he could see or think of no one but her.

One day when Goldenhair's heart was very heavy she wandered off by herself into the deep forest that lay all about the palace.

She had not gone far when her cloak caught upon a thorn-bush and was torn. When she saw the rent she was frightened, for she knew her cruel stepmother would make it an excuse for punishing her; and at the thought of

her helplessness the child threw herself down at the foot of a tree and began to weep.

Suddenly a voice beside her said, "Why do you weep so bitterly, Princess?"

Goldenhair looked up, and there, standing close beside her, was a fairy youth. He was very small, and was dressed all in green and silver. He had a cap upon his head, and about his neck was a chain, from which hung a jewel that sparkled brighter than a diamond.

Goldenhair gazed at him wonderingly. "I am weeping because I have torn my cloak," she answered, "and I am afraid my stepmother will punish me." And with that she began to sob again.

Then the fairy felt sorry for her, as he had never felt sorry for any one before. "Do not weep," he said, "and I may be able to help you."

With that he stepped to a toadstool close by, and, feeling under it, he drew out a toadstool thorn, invisible to mortal eyes. This he threaded with a strand of

spider-web silk, and then he placed it in Goldenhair's fingers. "Draw together the edges of the cloak where it is torn," he said, "and sew it with this."

The princess looked at her fingers, but she could see nothing. Still, she could feel the magic strand. Wondering, she drew the edges of the rent together,

and began stitching with the invisible needle; and as she stitched, the torn edges twisted and wove together again, so that they became whole as they had been before.

When she had finished, the fairy knelt before her and lifted the edge of the cloak. "Look," he said; "now no one could know that it had ever been torn." And then immediately he vanished like a breath.

Goldenhair rubbed her eyes and looked about her. The forest was very still. There was not a living thing to be seen, not even a bird or a squirrel. She lifted her cloak and looked, but she could not see where it had been mended. Then suddenly she felt afraid, and, turning, she ran back to the castle as fast as she could.

All the rest of the day she thought and thought about the fairy, and wondered whether she had really seen him, but she could scarcely believe it.

The next night when it grew dark

Goldenhair stole down as usual to the scullery to comb her hair. She made sure that no one was there, and then she took off her hood and shook down her locks. When she had done that, they almost covered her with their golden strands. She began to brush and comb them, and as she brushed she sang:—

"I comb my locks, I comb my locks!
My father is a king;
My stepmother has hair as black
As any raven's wing.

"I comb my locks, I comb my locks!
She bids me bind them tight;
She makes me wear a sooty hood
To hide them from her sight.

"I comb my locks, I comb my locks!
Alas! that only here
I dare to lay my hood aside
And brush them without fear."

Having brushed her hair until it shone, Goldenhair bound it up again, and covered its brightness with her hood. She took up her candle and was about to leave

the scullery when she heard a sound as of some one sighing sadly.

She listened, but all was still. "'T was only the wind that sighed beneath the door," she said to herself, and again she was about to go when she heard the sighing once more, and this time she knew that it was not the wind. The sound came from the outer door of the scullery, the one that opened into the forest.

Goldenhair was frightened, but yet she could not think of any one being in distress without longing to help them. She crept over to the door and laid her ear against it. "Who is there?" she asked.

There was no answer, but she heard some one grieving softly on the other side of the door. Then all was still.

"Who is there?" repeated Goldenhair. "If it is some one in trouble, speak."

There was no answer, but a sigh so sad that it went to the heart. She hesitated no longer, but opened the door.

The draught of wind almost blew out

her candle, but she put her hand around it to shelter it, and by its light she saw leaning against the doorway the same fairy she had seen in the forest.

The princess looked and wondered. "Why are you here?" she asked. "Did you come to look for me?"

"Alas," sighed the fairy, "I would that I had never seen you."

"Why do you say that?" asked the princess.

"Because if I had not seen you weeping in the forest I would not have broken the fairy laws, teaching you to mend your cloak with magic such as fairies alone should use. It is for this that sorrow has come upon me and I have been banished from the fairy court. Now I must journey out in the huge rough world like an outcast, until I have accomplished the task set me by the fairy queen for a punishment."

When Goldenhair heard this she was greatly troubled, for she felt that she was indeed the cause of it all.

"What is this task they have set you?" she asked in a trembling voice.

"It is to weave a net of magic gold; the net in whose meshes alone can be caught a wicked enchantress who has been haunting this forest. For a long time she has been darkening it with her wicked spells and now upon me has fallen the heavy task of ridding the forest of her."

"But is this magic gold so hard to find? You are a fairy and surely you should know where to seek it."

"*Though I am as old as the oldest tree*
Such gold I never yet did see.

Only this much I know for this the queen told me; it is gold —

That lives and yet is not alive;
That comes neither from earth nor water;
Softer than silk and harder to weld than steel."

"*Gold that lives and yet is not alive;*
That comes neither from earth nor water;
Softer than silk but harder to weld than steel"

the princess murmured softly to herself. Then suddenly she gave a cry of joy.

Setting down the candle, she slipped off her hood and shook down her hair, so that it fell all about her, glittering in the candle-light. "Is not this the magic gold?" she cried. "See! It lives and yet it is not alive. It comes neither from the earth nor from the water, and it is softer than silk and yet all the hammers in the world could not weld one strand of it."

The fairy cried aloud in his wonder and admiration. "It is indeed the magic gold."

"Then take it, — take it and weave your net," cried Goldenhair.

With hands that trembled with eagerness she drew from her pocket a pair of golden scissors that had been her mother's. With these she clipped strand after strand of the shiny locks, and they fell at the fairy's feet; they lay there in a shining heap.

"Enough! enough!" he cried.

"Then, quick," said the princess, "let us begin to knot them into a net."

"No need of that," answered the fairy. "There is a quicker way than that." Drawing his fairy sword from its sheath, he struck it lightly upon the shining locks.

"*Fold on fold,*
Magic gold,
Into a net be knotted and rolled,"

he cried. At his spell the silken locks began to twist themselves; they rolled into strands and knotted together in meshes until they were a golden net.

Suddenly the princess turned her head and looked behind her. She had heard a sound at the scullery door. The next moment it was thrown open, and there stood the stepmother, peering in with an evil look. Behind her was the king.

"Look," cried the queen, pointing at Goldenhair. "Is it not just as I told you? The girl knows that I hate the very sight of her hair, and that I gave her a hood to wear that I might not see it; yet at every chance she has she slips

away to comb her locks and weave her wicked spells."

"Do you indeed dare to weave your spells against the queen?" cried the king angrily, — for he was under the enchantment of the wicked queen, and he believed all that she wished him to.

Goldenhair began to weep. "Alas!" she sobbed, "I know no spells, and I thought that if I came here to comb my hair she would never see it."

Suddenly the stepmother spied the scissors, which Goldenhair had let fall upon the floor. Stooping, she snatched them up. "Since you will heed nothing that I say, there is but one way left; your hair shall be shorn close to your head, even to the last lock."

But at this moment the fairy stepped forward from the shadow in which he had been standing. In the dark scullery he seemed to shine with light. "There is no need of that," he cried. "I know you, wicked enchantress; and the net has

already been woven that shall break your evil spells."

The queen gave a hoarse cry and shrank back; but in a moment the fairy had caught up the net from the floor and cast it over her. It was in vain that she struggled; the net only drew closer and closer about her.

"Why, what is this?" cried the king, but the queen only croaked hoarsely in reply.

The fairy drew his sword and pointed it at her. "By the power of the magic net take your true shape, false queen," he cried. And then — it was no longer a woman who struggled in the net, but only a great black raven, with a curving beak and cruel, angry eyes. It struggled there a while, and then flew out into the dark forest, dragging the net with it, and croaking hoarsely as it went.

"Let her go," said the fairy, "for, whatever becomes of her, her power has now gone forever."

Suddenly there was a soft strain of

music, and the scullery was filled with rosy light. "They are coming, are coming for me," cried the fairy, and his face grew bright with joy. The next moment the fairy queen stood beside him, and with her were a great crowd of attendant fairies.

The banished elf sank upon his knee before her, but she raised him graciously.

"Your task has been well done," she said. "You have freed the forest from the evil magic that has been haunting it, and now you shall return to the fairy court; and not only this, but you shall be my favorite page and follow in my train."

Once more the fairy knelt before her to kiss her hand.

The queen turned to Goldenhair. "And you, dear child," she said, "you have suffered so much here,—leave it all. Come with us, and with one touch of my wand you shall become a fairy too."

But at this the king started forward. With the breaking of the evil spell all his former love for his little daughter had

returned. "Do not leave me, Goldenhair," he cried.

"No," said Goldenhair to the fairy, "he is my father, and I may not leave him; he would be lonely without me, now that the queen has gone."

"Then, farewell," cried the fairies. "The forest calls us, and we have already lingered too long. Farewell, farewell, Goldenhair." So saying, they disappeared, the light and music fading with them.

They were never seen in the castle again; but often in the wood the princess would come upon them dancing in their fairy rings, or hear them call to her from flowers or clumps of fern, for they did not hide from her as they do from others.

Time went on, and many kings and princes sought the hand of Goldenhair in marriage; but she would have none of them.

At last the old king died, and then suddenly there appeared at the court a

tall and noble youth. All wondered at his beauty, but no one but Goldenhair knew that it was the fairy of the wood, who had become a mortal being for her sake.

She loved him and gave him her hand, and they were married; and after that they ruled the kingdom together in great peace and happiness.

Chapter Twelve

Home Again

ELLEN looked about her. She was still standing in the golden room of the Queerbodies' house. Before her was the Fairy Tale, smiling down into her face with shining eyes. There, too, were the gander and the Queerbody.

"Is that the story?" the Queerbody asked.

Ellen clasped her hands. "Oh, yes," she cried, looking up into the Fairy Tale's face. "I 'm sure you 're the one. There were Goldenhair and the sooty hood and all. You 'll stay made up now, won't you?"

"Yes," answered the Story; "and more than that, I 'm going back with you too."

Ellen gave a little cry of delight. She took the Story's hand in hers, and it was so smooth and white she laid her cheek against it, and then kissed it softly.

"But how about the rhyme?" asked the gander.

"Oh, yes; I 'd forgotten to ask for that." Then Ellen told the Queerbody how she had promised Mother Goose that she would try to find a forgotten rhyme for her. The child could n't tell the Queerbody exactly what the rhyme was, of course, because it was a forgotten one, but she explained as well as she could.

The Queerbody seemed to know which one she meant. "Oh, yes, I can easily make that over; but if I do, you must promise to remember it and say it sometimes after you go back."

Ellen was very willing to promise.

Then the Queerbody bent over another jar and took out some wondercluff. She patted and twisted and pulled, and then she set what she had made upon the

floor. It was a funny-looking little rhyme, with a brown belted coat and a pointed cap, and a broad grin on its fat, round face.

"Quank! quank!" cried the gander. "There he is again."

The Rhyme blinked and looked about him, and then he spoke, still grinning broadly.

"Hello! I guess I've been forgotten, haven't I? But somebody seems to have brought me back. Well, there's the old gander, same as ever." He ran over and caught hold of the gander's bridle. "Give me a ride?" he asked.

"Yes, I'm going to carry you back with me."

"Oh, goody, goody!" And the Rhyme hopped up and down as though its toes were made of rubber.

But Ellen looked anxious. "I wonder how we're all to get back," she said, with a glance at the Fairy Tale. "I don't believe the gander can carry us all."

"Oh, you 're not going back with me," he answered. "The journey 's too long for that, and there 's an easier way."

"Yes, a much easier way," chimed in the Queerbody. "Why, it 's so easy that sometimes I go home without even trying."

Ellen wondered. "Do you? And then you have to come all that long way to get here again?"

"No, it 's shorter when you know the way. Sometimes I get back in a minute. But put your ear against the wall and listen."

Ellen put her ear against the golden wall. As she listened she gave a little gasp of amazement, and yet what she heard was not so very wonderful; it was only the voices of her mother and the seamstress talking quietly together in the sewing-room.

Presently the voices grew fainter. Ellen leaned harder against the wall to catch their tones. Then all in a moment the wall yielded to her weight,

just as a snowdrift might, and she fell through it.

She put out her hands to save herself, and caught hold of something hard and solid; it was the shelf of the bookcase. She was back in her own familiar nursery. She looked about her. There was no sign of where she had come through, no break in wall or ceiling. With a little cry she leaned forward and thrust her hands back between the book-shelves. They touched only the hard, cold wall. The vines were only painted on the paper; they would not draw aside under her eager fingers.

As Ellen turned from the bookcase she saw the shape of the Fairy Tale standing between her and the window. She was sure she saw it. It smiled and waved its hand to her, and then it was gone like the fading of one's breath upon the window-pane.

"Dear Fairy Tale, where are you?" cried Ellen; but there was no reply.

Ellen waited a moment. "Fairy Tale!" she whispered.

Still silence.

Opening the door into the entry, the little girl ran down to the sewing-room as fast as she could. "Mamma, mamma!" she called.

She burst like a little whirlwind into the room where her mother and the seamstress were quietly at work, and threw herself into her mother's lap. "I've been having the queerest time," she cried excitedly; "and you never could guess where I've been; never."

"Wait," said her mother; "you're

tumbling my work. And how excited you are, dear!"

She put aside her sewing, and took the little girl upon her lap. "Now, what have you been doing?"

Breathlessly and with flushing cheeks Ellen told her mother all about her journey and her strange adventures on her way to the Queerbodies' house.

The mother listened and wondered. "That was a wonderful dream, indeed," she said.

"A dream! Why, it was n't a dream, mamma. It really happened. And then I saw the Fairy Tale after I came back. And then the Forgotten Story itself; I could n't have dreamed all that, you know."

"But, my dear, it could n't have been anything but a dream."

"Well, wait. I 'm going to go down and tell grandmamma about it; and if it 's the same story, then you know it *must* be true."

"Very well; only go down quietly, for she may not have wakened from her nap yet."

When Ellen peeped in through her grandmother's door, however, she saw the old lady sitting over in her rocking-chair near the window, knitting.

"May I come in?" she asked.

"Yes, yes, come in, little Clara. I was just wondering where you and all the other children were."

The child drew up a little stool and sat down by her grandmother's knee. "Granny," she said, trying to speak quietly, "I think I know what happened to little Goldenhair now. Shall I tell you the story?"

"Yes, do, my dear."

So Ellen told her grandmother the story of Goldenhair.

The grandmother listened, smiling and nodding her head. After a while she grew so interested that she pushed her glasses up on top of her cap.

"Yes, yes, that is it. I did n't know anybody remembered that story any more, but that is the way I heard it when I was a child."

"Then it 's true," cried the child triumphantly; "and I really did find the Queerbodies' house, and see them making stories."

"Ah, yes, I knew a Queerbody once, and she used to make stories; — verses, too. She was a lovely girl. It was long ago."

"And did she tell you all about the Queerbodies' house and the golden jars?"

But the grandmother shook her head. "It is a long time ago, and I forget. I am so old — so old, little Clara."

"I knew it was n't a dream," murmured the child; and as she sat there by her grandmother's knee she felt the Fairy Tale was there, smiling gently upon them both, even though no one could see her.